

A Study of Tawfiq al-Hakim's Equilibrium Doctrine and Philosophical Narratives

Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the University of Liverpool for the degree of Doctor in Philosophy by Shereen Hamed Shaw.

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For my Mother

Hala ‘Abduh Dergham



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A Study of Tawfiq al-Hakim's *Equilibrium* Doctrine and Philosophical Narratives

By Shereen Shaw

ABSTRACT

Tawfiq al-Hakim is known across the Arab world as a pioneer dramatist. He is one of many misunderstood writers and philosophers. My aim is to introduce him to the English-speaking public in order to shed some light on a specific period known to be one of the best in Egypt intellectually and culturally. Former President Nasser's ideologies, and those of former President Sadat such as his "open-door" policy to the West, have contributed positively to the forming of an intellectual renaissance in Egypt. This rich period in Egyptian history is one that can directly shed light on the literary and philosophical contributions of al-Hakim, and on the social and cultural issues that should be revisited in order to gain an understanding of the problems that face Egyptians today. With this said, it is my hope that by reviving al-Hakim's philosophical doctrines and by examining the major issues he addresses in his texts, I will be able to explain and clarify some misconceptions about this author, his philosophy and his work. I would also like to show ways in which his distinctive doctrine of equilibrium can be of use to us both in the East and the West. The objectives, accordingly, are twofold: (1) To introduce and critically examine al-Hakim's equilibrium doctrine; and, (2) To identify the philosophical traits and Western influences that had an impact on his character and philosophy. The core problem that this work will indirectly address is the problem of how philosophy in the Arab world, according to Sari Nusseibeh's article "The Arab World: What role for philosophy?" has been blatantly used as a tool in order to defend one version or another of the religious beliefs of those who pursued it. I ask what specific role a philosopher or intellectual can play in his or her society and how his philosophy can be put to use. This question is one that has been long forgotten in the Arab world. Freeing the Arab world from the colonizer, back in the 1930s, was clearly a goal for many intellectuals. Today, freeing the Arab mind by introducing a philosophy or an ideology that can be of use to the Muslim world as well as to the West would be a great task to accomplish.

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NOTE ON TRANSLATION

I would like to emphasize that, unless otherwise noted, all translations of Arabic materials throughout this thesis and al-Hakim's texts are mine. In my analysis, I am relying on the translation of al-Hakim's book *al- Ta'aduliyya (Equilibrium)*¹ to provide evidence of what I believe to be foreign influences within his proposed doctrine.² I carried out the translation from Arabic to English in order, first, to revive the work and, secondly, to be able to link the doctrine of equilibrium to some of al-Hakim's philosophical narratives written from the early 1950s to the late 1960s.³ Thus, as part of my thesis, I am offering the first English translation of al-Hakim's main book, *al- Ta'aduliyya* (which I will refer to as *Equilibrium* throughout this thesis. The book was published in 1955. *Equilibrium* is important to us today for many reasons. It is not only al-Hakim's only attempt to compile the essence of his philosophy all in one work, but it is also a work which shows his experimentation with philosophical ideas in a literary framework.

I encountered much difficulty in translating al-Hakim's works into English and I have attempted to remain faithful to the styles and expression in the two cultures. Fortunately, I was able to seek editorial help from Dr J'annine Jobling, to whom I owe thanks for reading and editing the earlier versions of my translations and for giving me feedback and suggestions to clarify some obscure words. Having said that, I also rearranged some sentences and made some sacrifices to stay faithful to the source language text and to its author. The system of transliteration applied is based on that used by the Library of Congress in Washington, D. C., omitting macrons and subscript dots. In this connection, it must be mentioned that I was unable to obtain some of the European translations of al-Hakim's works that already exist and hence

¹ Throughout this thesis, I will be using "*Equilibrium*" or "the *Equilibrium* doctrine" to refer to al-Hakim's *al-Ta'aduliyya*, or "*madhhab al- Ta'aduliyya*". The doctrine suggests that within every individual, there are forces of weakness and of strength that are in a relationship of contention and dependence. In struggle, the individual ought not to fall into despair but try to discover where the forces of strength reside from within oneself in order to compensate for any shortage or weakness. And through this process, he or she can make individual and social progress. The relationship between the forces (i.e. as one of compensation, contention and dependence), is one that presents to us more than a mere act of restoring balance (*al- Ta'adul*).

² Tawfiq al-Hakim published, a few years later, a supplement titled *al- Ta'aduliyya wal-islam (Equilibrium and Islam)*, in order to compliment his main book, *al- Ta'aduliyya*. The supplement explains al-Hakim's philosophical position in relation to Islam. I have not included a translation of the supplement in this thesis as it does not add to my initial enquiry (i.e. examining the foreign influences on al-Hakim's thought). There is an analytical study by Dr Zaki Naguib Mahmoud, an Egyptian philosopher, available only in Arabic titled *al- Ta'aduliyya wa- al-Ta'aduliyya wal-islam* published on the first of February 1968 in a special edition of al- Helal magazine. This study is more of a commentary than an analysis of al-Hakim's text. It does not aid readers' understanding of al-Hakim's philosophy, influences or identify the misconceptions that affected his readership. The study offers no translations.

³ This is the period when he began to write philosophically.

the majority of quotations from his works are my own unless otherwise noted. In addition, the problem that every translator and researcher is faced with is to find adequate material to support the research. Unfortunately, I hardly found any of the biographical materials on al-Hakim's philosophy present in Egypt during my search, perhaps because they were corrupted.⁴ Those I did find were of little help because they focused mainly on al-Hakim's life and theatrical works. It became apparent that the interest in al-Hakim's work in Egypt, and in Middle Eastern countries generally, has always concentrated solely on the theatrical productions, since they were, and still are, the most popular of his works. But this means that there is a gap in the market for a new assessment, if not a revival, of al-Hakim's philosophical doctrines and narratives.

Finally, I have felt that the research would not be complete without providing supporting materials and translations of al-Hakim's text. In appendix one (p.180), I included al-Hakim's family consent, rare personal images of al-Hakim with his family and other intellectuals and translations of key texts. Appendix two (p.196) includes a chronology of al-Hakim's philosophical publications,⁵ a literature review, a survey of his readership, two interviews with present journalists (October Magazine and *al-Ahram* newspaper) and finally, archive materials (microfilm).

⁴ In July 2014, I visited *al-Ahram* newspaper's archive and found a single folder (no. 122) on al-Hakim. The file has articles (from 1963 to 1980) focusing on al-Hakim's character, events in his life and a few of his theatrical works. The file is in a very bad state; papers are dated and falling apart, and of poor quality (hardly readable). Also, I was informed by staff that printing some articles was prohibited. Materials prior to 1963 were only available on microfilm.

⁵ The chronology (p. 197) was compiled based on my readings of William M. Hutchins's detailed chronology. See Hutchins' *Tawfiq al-Hakim: A Reader's Guide* published in 2003.

PREFACE

The initial impulse for the research and translation presented here was due to an interest that arose through reading Tawfiq al-Hakim's writings during my undergraduate education. Little did I know that his writings had interesting philosophical dimensions. I began this research with the belief that there was evidence of foreign influence in al-Hakim's equilibrium doctrine which was prompted by a trip he made to Paris in 1925. The ostensible purpose of the trip was to study law, but instead he immersed himself in French arts, literature and philosophy. I later discovered that there was indeed a dialogue between Tawfiq al-Hakim and Jean Paul Sartre, as well as Simon de Beauvoir, as a result of a trip that they made to Egypt in 1967 during President Nasser's reign. The meeting of all three authors supported my speculation that al-Hakim had been subject to Western influence. So I began investigating further al-Hakim's philosophy on this basis, and especially the period between 1950s and 1987, the year he died.⁶ I was surprised to find that although some research had been carried out on a number of significant plays,⁷ there had been less attention paid to al-Hakim's philosophical narratives and, more importantly, to his equilibrium doctrine. This discovery fuelled my enthusiasm and interest. It highlighted not only the value, but also the originality of my research in a context in which questions like "Who is the Arab subject? Can this subject think of himself in terms and language that would be organic to his history? Can Arabs have an authentic existence, and is it possible for Arabs to become modern on their own terms?" are very much current today.⁸ On such a basis, the hope is that my work will offer readers an innovative assessment, if not a revival, of al-Hakim's philosophical works, where I believe answers for these questions may be found.

With this in mind, I began to ask why an author like al-Hakim is overlooked in Egypt and in the Arab world and why he is less read compared to other writers of his time. I can only assume that one of the reasons for overlooking his philosophy, in particular in the Arab world, is due to the sensitivity of the issues that he had addressed and discussed, directly or indirectly, as underlying themes in his works. A further possible conclusion is that we, the Egyptians, have become less and less occupied with our past and our heritage in the midst of today's

⁶ I believe he was 89 years old, although some speculate that he was past 90 due to the uncertainty around his exact date of birth.

⁷ I found a doctoral thesis dated 1952 presented to the University of Paris by Suhayl Idris entitled "Le Roman Arabe et les influences étrangères de 1900 à 1950" This has some information about the French influences on al-Hakim's novels but without specific details. There is an unpublished doctoral thesis by G. V. Tutungi submitted in 1966 to Indiana University titled "Tawfiq al-Hakim and The West". The latter has been beneficial to this thesis.

⁸ That is to say post the 2011 revolution in Cairo, Egypt.

distractions. Some of the issues discussed in al-Hakim's philosophical works, mostly in the mid-50s, were connected with the questioning of Islamic dogma and organised religions. He pin-pointed the social and political flaws in the Egyptian culture and attempted in the process to familiarise Egyptians with Western ideas. His views were communicated in different forms. For example, in addition to his literary and philosophical publications, he wrote regularly for *al-Ahram* newspaper and had a daily column.⁹ I must say, when I first read al-Hakim, I also found his discussions to be unconventional in terms of what is expected of an Egyptian who has had an Islamic upbringing. What was astonishing is the way in which he was persistent in experimenting equally with Eastern and Western ideas regardless of norms and restrictions put upon him. The way in which he made his views explicit in the 50s (and continued to do so till the year before he died in the late 80s) led to many controversies. But regardless of the obstacles put in his path from the ever-changing political system, and from society, colleagues, friends and members of his family who might have advised him otherwise, he continued writing. I found myself sympathising with his position. It seemed to me that his struggle (which I might be experiencing as well), as a generality, is with the problem that the West does not accept and the East does not forgive. Yet regardless of the criticisms that he received in abundance (in the early 50s), he continued to make explicit his beliefs and predictions about the future of mankind (the state of man in a modern society) and challenged clerics of prominent religious institutions such as al-Azhar in Egypt about their interpretations and practices of Islam as a religion.

The answer to the question “what fuelled al-Hakim's enthusiasm and love for experimentation in the fields of both philosophy and literature to such an extent that he was suddenly, from the early 50s, constantly questioned, criticised and attacked for his boldness and for what he implied?” is one that will be addressed throughout this thesis. What I can, however, say at this stage is that during the course of my examinations it has become evident to me that al-Hakim's literary and philosophical career can be seen as a successful example of a merging between Eastern and Western ideas or of a “borderless” view of literature, philosophy and culture. I choose to use the term “borderless” or “borderless thought” as an indication of al-Hakim's belief in a “non-categorical division” between Eastern and Western thought.¹⁰ In fact, he made remarks in various texts, especially in *Zahrat al-'Umr*, on how he had always found past works by Eastern and Western authors to be valuable “treasures” that he

⁹ He began doing so on the 3rd of January 1938. He was on the board of *al-Ahram* from 1961 and won the state prize for literature. Between 1981- 1983, he was an honorary President of *al-Ahram*'s administrative board.

¹⁰ This, I believe, was a common belief held by authors of his generation who were attending mainly French schools in Egypt. Authors who grew up in a colonial era were embracing and yet resisting the colonizer.

believed should be read and studied thoroughly before one could begin a literary or philosophical career. He writes:

I left no aspect of intellectual endeavours unstudied: I plunged into the literatures, the philosophies, the arts of all nations, not allowing myself to ignore any branch of knowledge, since I believed that a writer in our age must have as broad an outlook as possible. So, I exerted myself in an attempt to encompass the most important products of human genius.¹¹

The young al-Hakim did not explicitly convey this view in some of his early works such as *al-Dayf al-Thaqil* and *'Usfur min-al Sharq*. The reason for this, I believe, lies in the hostility towards the British occupation and the high sense of nationalism that was present in Egypt during this period. This attitude, naturally, overshadowed any of his interests, and he channelled his efforts towards protesting with the young minds of his generation. Yet, from the late 40s to the mid-80s, from al-Hakim's work as shown in my chronology (see appendix 2 p. 196), it is evident that his attitude developed and that there was a clear transition in his life and career. He moved from conveying in his writings a strong sense of nationalism towards an "openness" towards the West and to a conception of a "borderless thought". And with such openness to Western ideas, he, as a writer and a philosopher, had in my view dramatically changed not only the course of modern Arabic literature, as did many of his generation, but also, he particularly changed the course of modern Egyptian philosophy.¹²

Finally, any good researcher would know that one cannot delve into al-Hakim's philosophy without the need to shed light on the factors that had affected his personality, career and reputation. This approach is vital because it will not only enable readers to understand clearly al-Hakim's formation, transitions and the trends in his thought, but also it will formulate an essential foundation from which the next chapters will build on. For this reason, in the following chapter, I would like to share with readers some of the background information and influences on al-Hakim which I came across during my research. In doing so, my aim is to identify who he mixed with at the height of his intellectual career and in later life; secondly, to know more about his reputation and readership; and finally, to have a better grasp of the scholarly work that has been carried out on al-Hakim to date.¹³ By the end of this thesis, I hope

¹¹ Tawfiq al-Hakim. (1943) *Zahrat al-'Umr*, Cairo, p. 58

¹² Upon returning from France for the first time (1929), al Hakim found the Egyptian theatre hardly in existence. People paid less attention to plays and assigned a negative stigma to playwrights. He decided to change this with the help of a few of his colleagues in order to revive theatre. He wrote extensively and encouraged groups to hold theatrical productions. This means that during this period (till the late 1940s) al-Hakim was trying to revive a genre that was not appreciated by the people. He was met with criticisms from those who considered theatre to be solely a means of entertainment. His reputation during this early period was accordingly as a playwright.

¹³ See survey of al-Hakim's readership and a literature review in appendix 2, pp. 196-199.

it will become clear why al-Hakim emphasizes the necessity of a synthesis of ideas from two philosophical traditions, European and Islamic (Western and Eastern), which leads him to a conception of “borderless” literature or thought. His philosophical narratives raise the question whether these two systems of thought are as distinct as they may at first appear, and this goes hand-in-hand with a questioning of such monolithic categories as “Western” and “(Middle) Eastern”. With this in mind, through examinations and analysis, I hope that it will become apparent how al-Hakim, as a writer and philosopher, incorporated his doctrine of equilibrium in some of his dramatic works and philosophical narratives of this period.¹⁴ In defending his stand and doctrine against a few of the criticisms that he had received for making his beliefs public, I will analyse in my final chapter some of the main articles and scholarly work directed at al-Hakim in the hope that readers and scholars alike may find some inspiration from his ideas and value in his philosophical work.

¹⁴ The philosophical narratives I wish to address are: *Arini Allah* (1953) Cairo; series of short stories. *Al-Ahadith al-Arba'ah wa-al-Qadaya al-Dunya allati Atharatha* (1983) Cairo; series of religious dialogues. And finally, *Hadith ma'a al-Kawkab* (1974) Beirut; philosophical dialogues.

**Tawfiq Al Hakim's
Equilibrium Doctrine**

1955

**Translated by
Shereen Hamed Shaw**

The Equilibrium: My Doctrine in Life and Art

By Tawfiq al-Hakim

First Published in 1955

Translated by Shereen Hamed Shaw

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These pages are nothing but answers to a question. A brief answer to a very important question addressed to me by a serious reader. I have made my answer open to the public so that it may shed light on my published writings. After all, this work in particular embodies what I may be able to describe as my doctrine in life and art. You ask me what my philosophy in life and art is. You say that you have read all my books and have come to the conclusion that my work attempts to explain in general human nature in relation to the temporal and cosmic status of the universe, and in particular human nature in relation to the generations and environment of society. You also claim that this explanation suggests a position which can be called a doctrine if we were able to establish its foundations and norms, and here is what you ask me to clarify further. I must say that I was pleased with what you said and at the same time, amazed. I was pleased because I love a reader who attempts to explore me, and I was amazed because I had not thought until that day of what you suggested. The reason for this is, perhaps, that I hate the kind of art that is built on a doctrine, yet I do not mind a doctrine that is built on art because art is the free explorer of the secrets of the universe. This freedom of emotion, feeling, inquiry and thought have always been my primary tactic. Now that I have already expressed myself freely, the doctrine that can be extracted from such works does not harm me or chain me. And since you invite me to identify a doctrine or a position within my works, I will not decline. Based on your idea, I will thus speak on:

Firstly: The status of the human being in the universe.

Secondly: The status of the human being in society.

First of all, what is a human being? This question is as old as human thinking, and will remain new as long as human thought remains in this world. Human beings- along with thought- prompts this question, and since the question has been asked, it must be answered. This answer is what sciences, philosophies, arts and literature attempt to express in changing forms and shapes. And no one can know the end result of these attempts because answers cannot be definitive when the question is a mystery. The question is a mystery because it is generated by two mysterious parents: the human being and thought. If centuries pass by and the questions “what is a human being?” and “what is thought?” are asked every day, could we then ever reach a final answer to these mysteries? I do not think anyone can reach a final resolution or a decisive answer. What is needed is the exertion of effort into observation and explanation, each from own angle, method and style. This is all that we are capable of and this is our sole duty. Our existence should not come to an end without us asking ourselves the question ‘what is a human being?’ and attempting to find an explanation. At this point, an assumption here comes into play to help us. We must assume certain facts and accept them in

order to be able to proceed in the darkness. Were it not for assumptions in philosophy and science, there wouldn't have been any progress towards explaining any phenomena.

I will assume, temporarily, that a human being does not need an explanation. He is that creature, known to us all, who lives on this globe. I will also temporarily assume that thought is the movement of self-consciousness in an orderly and continuous orientation: meaning logically. What are, then, the characteristics of this thinking creature who wonders about the truth of his nature? The first undeniable characteristic is that he lives on this earth. Then surely there must be a connexion or a shared characteristic between him and the earth. But what is the earth? We have come out of one difficult question with a more complex question. Let the most important feature of the earth be sufficient; it is a sphere that is in equilibrium or in harmony with a bigger sphere, namely the sun. If there is disruption of such balance, the earth will be engulfed by the sun or lost in space. This equilibrium is, therefore, the first truth of earth's life.

Is the phenomenon of equilibrium the primary truth of human existence? Let us look first at how a human being lives in terms of his physical life. He lives by breathing. But what is breathing? It is of course a balanced movement of inhaling and exhaling. If it is disrupted by a longer inhalation that is more than necessary and exceeds exhalation or vice versa, human life stops. If we then look at a human being's spirituality, we find the same law applies. The spiritual life of a human being also has its own 'exhaling and inhaling' but it is referred to instead as 'thought and emotion', or in other words, as the mind and the heart. The right spiritual life is a balance between thought and emotion. In fact, what we call mental and psychological illnesses are nothing but an imbalance or disruption in their equilibrium; either through the expansion of feelings to such a point that thought is nullified or its function disrupted and a human being acts like a child, or through the domination of thought to the extent of impeding emotion, thereby human consciousness gets altogether muddled. We thus conclude that a human being is a creature who is both physically and spiritually in balance.

The human being, however, is not the only creature that fits this description. All creatures that exist on this balanced earth are themselves in balance- just like the composition of their mother earth; such balance is the secret of all creatures' life. Animals, plants and matter are all subject to the law of equilibrium in their biological, chemical and natural composition even from the perspective of modern science, which changed the beliefs of the 19th century on 'matter'. Modern science revealed with its theories on 'matter' and the 'spectrum' that what we describe as matter is nothing but strongly concentrated 'energy', and it has written new laws on the gravitational field between matter particles. Gravity is the foundation of equilibrium because it means the existence of two forces, while equilibrium means ensuring that two forces

exist without one engulfing the other.

But let us leave the physical aspect of the human being to men of science. What concerns men of arts and literature is the spiritual side of the human being even if sometimes both sides seem interwoven. In fact, it is difficult, especially from the perspective of modern science, to separate what is material from that which is spiritual. What is even more difficult is to find a specific definition for the word 'spiritual'. What we of course mean here by the use of the word is the common concept of the term in arts and literature, which is the meaning that refers to the intellectual and emotional life of the human being. If literature or art want to explain the human being, they shed light on his intellectual and emotional position towards the world he exists in, with its time, place, past, present, future, environment and society etc. The literary author or artist's method for explaining the human being is different from that of a scientist or a philosopher. A literary author or an artist does not resort to a research method or explanation, but rather they resort to their talent in creation and imitation to form an image of the human being. More accurately, they form an image of the human being's thought and emotion that may include implicit or explicit features and qualities that are able to aid scientists and philosophers in deducing facts and laws.

Creativity and imitation alone are not sufficient to explain or provide an accurate image of the human being without inspiration from science and the general knowledge that exists in the age of the literary author or the artist. For example, Abou al-alaa's or Shakespeare's idea of the human being is at the same time a reflection of the common concept that was widespread in their age, based on the prevailing culture and its knowledge. The literary author or artist will not be able to define the position of the human being in his time, world, society or age if the relationship between literature and art is disconnected from the science and ideas that surround him. The role of the literary author or the artist is not merely to imagine these sciences or to personify these ideas. Their duty is to consider these sciences and ideas as resources which help them to freely construct a new image of the human being, inspired by their special ability to create, to observe and to imitate. When talking about imitation, I do not mean copying superficial appearances- but rather simulation of nature in its hidden laws, which an artist can detect with his refined emotions. This is how literature and the arts explain the human being. You may ask me after that: What is the explanation of a human being from the perspective of literature or art in our present age? The answer to this question will need volumes and volumes filled with views, doctrines and positions that have occupied people's thought during the last century. I do not think that this is the topic of our conversation at the moment. What is required of me in my answer to you is to give you an explanation of a human being that is extracted

from my writings, isn't that what you require? I will not refer to all the books or dwell on the details, for I am not embarking on general research but providing a personal view as a starting point to whoever it may concern. What is the general status of the human being in this universe as I have imagined it? This question ought to be divided into two parts that arise in every age: Firstly: Is the human being *alone* in this universe? Secondly: Is the human being *free* in this universe?

The answer to these two questions requires determining the ramifications of what it is to be a human being and identifying the extent of his activities and his struggles. The new age¹⁵ indeed provided an answer by showing us that the human being is alone in this universe without a competitor; he is the God of this existence with ultimate freedom. With this answer, religious teachings were demolished and the new age labelled itself with the seal of materialism.¹⁶ And even though religion remained in many developed countries and continued its message, preserving aspects of its strength; the majority of people, even those holding on to their rituals and the spirit of scriptures, have fallen victims to materialism without their awareness. Our new age is so imbued with materialism that no closed window or sealed doors can prevent it. Its air seeps into souls unaware. But what is the reason for this? The cause is obvious: the equilibrium that prevailed until the 19th century between the power of the mind and the power of the heart, i.e. between activities of thought and activities of faith, has been disrupted ever since the supremacy of rational scientific achievements and the continuing stagnation of religion. Science, begot by the mind, doubled its strength, renewed its means and widened its horizons; while religion, begot by the heart, remained restricted in its horizon and unable to discover new springs in the depth of the human heart that would be in counterbalance with new phenomena discovered by the human mind. With this imbalance, the new era has swung to the more logical side, which has led it to submit to the sole dominance of the mind. As a consequence, human beings define the concept of freedom according to their freedom of thought, and reject anything that cannot be proved with research and experimentation: hence denying a will other than the human will or the existence of another other than him, for he becomes the sole creature in this universe. The disruption of this balance has had a natural and inevitable consequence, namely anxiety. The widespread anxiety in many souls today emanates from the imbalance between

¹⁵ "The new age" is used by al-Hakim throughout his text to refer to the start of what he considers to be the beginning of "modernity" where vast scientific and technological advancements were made. This could go back to the late 18th Century.

¹⁶ The author wishes to show that in "the material world" "religious teachings and spirituality" declined. Materialists in his view believe that the world is made up of a single substance, matter, the motions and properties of which could be used to explain all phenomena. This view contrasts his belief that there are unexplainable phenomena that are beyond human reach and understanding.

the mind and the heart,¹⁷ the intellect and faith. This imbalance must repair itself by itself over a period of time. There has been evidence over the years of this repair. The new era has renounced the notion of the human being as a sole creature in this universe. He has started longing for another creature that is superior. Religion, unfortunately, has not offered him a new framework for this idea that he desperately longs for. He has continued to wait and hope for a miracle to happen, but only within the realm of rational science that still dominates his thought. The interest today in flying saucers, and people's hope that others are coming with a message from a better world and superior creatures, are nothing but a general breeze to cool the feeling that dried out with the parched spring of religion, to relieve humans of anxiety and to rescue them a little from their isolation in this universe.

The disruption of balance between the mind and the heart within the framework of the question of time was the subject of my play *Ahl al-Kahf*.¹⁸ Also, the disruption of balance between absolute thought, personified by the character Shahrayar, and emotional faith, personified by the character Kamar, within the context of the question of place and its recurrence, was the subject of my play *Shahrazad*. The anxiety that a human being suffers from in the new era has another cause, which is associated with his immediate safety. He constantly lives in fear of his own physical destruction by his own doing. This cause is in itself a result of his intellectual and scientific triumphs. Man has developed tremendous and devastating material capabilities that could at any moment escape his control and become his own destruction. These capabilities are reined in only by his wisdom, but as he cannot guarantee this wisdom, he grows anxious for his safety and existence. Man lives day by day in this new era looking at the scale of equilibrium between power and wisdom with wondering restless eyes. This counterbalance between man's power and wisdom, its stability and disruption, was the subject of my play *Sulayman al-Hakim*. From all of this, my point of view on the question of man becomes clearer. The human being's predicament in this era is in my opinion a result of the disruption of his equilibrist composition. Thus, it is easy to envisage my answer to the two initial questions: Is the human being *alone* in this universe? And is he *free* in this universe?

I have not published a straightforward opinion per se on this subject, and yet it seems that I have developed one according to a number of foreign critics who are usually interested in extracting such underlying themes. In their commentaries and research on my twenty plays that have been translated, most of them mentioned that the dominating philosophy in my plays

¹⁷ The heart, according to al-Hakim, is presented as having a cognitive component which not only counterbalances the force of the mind, but also is influential enough to alter one's decisions and actions.

¹⁸ Qur'anic story (that of the sleepers of Ephesus)

is that human beings have limited capabilities before their destiny, and that human fate, in my opinion, is always linked to man's struggle against invisible forces. Some critics stressed this by claiming that, for me, beliefs have been liberated from their sacredness and become more mundane, but the human being has continued to be anxious and threatened by hidden forces. Whatever the case, it can be understood from what these critics wrote that they have concluded from my theatre that I support neither the notion of man's solitude in this universe nor the idea that man possesses absolute freedom. And this indeed I do not deny. I feel deep inside me that the human being is not alone in this universe, and this is what I call faith. No one has the right to ask faith for an explanation or proof. Either we feel or we do not feel and it is not up to the mind to intervene here to prove anything. Those who resort to the mind and its logic to prove faith are, in fact, harming faith itself because faith needs no external proof. I believe that I am not alone in feeling this way, and I have not lost my faith because I am an equilibrist. Yet, on the other hand, I think with my mind, not to support my faith that I am not alone, but to present the issue to my mind independent of faith itself. Would the mind accept the notion of a superior being? Meaning a 'superior being' than a human being? One that is far 'superior' to a human being?

Even animals of the highest rank do not recognise superiority but they are aware of the notion of power. The world, for these animals, is divided into: (a) weak creatures that they can defeat, (b) creatures that match their power and strength, or (c) stronger creatures that need to be avoided. Strength for animals is entirely physical. Human beings, however, are capable of recognizing with their minds the notion of superiority or in other words, of recognizing a being that is superior both, mentally and spiritually. They can see around them evidence of a powerful mental strength and a superior spirit a million times stronger than their own mind and spirit. So what is preventing human beings, then, from accepting the notion of a superior being? Animals have accepted the notion of power within their material and physical domain and avoid confronting the stronger. This avoidance shows the animal's faith in the other's existence, so why doesn't the human being accept the notion of superiority in his mental and spiritual domain and believe in the existence of a superior being? My mind acknowledges the notion of superiority, yet it is incapable of creating a convincing and clear image that matches its majesty. This is because the mind can only create images that suit its logic, which is based on assumptions and observations that fall within its experiences. The mind will, thus, only create a familiar image of the superior; an image that is exceedingly personified based on the mind's prior knowledge and perspective. And this will only produce a distorted image that devalues the idea, which is perhaps one of the reasons for atheism. We ask the mind to create

an image of God but it fails. Instead of laughing and mocking the mind, we laugh and mock the idea of a God. Let us then believe in the heart only, for this is its strength, and let us leave the mind thinking in its realm only, for this is its strength as well. This counterbalance between the two forces ensures the integrity of the human character.

What remains for me to answer is the question: Is the human being *free* in this universe? We can only find the answer to this question in the two forces that are responsible for awareness and conscience, i.e. the mind and the heart. Each of them can provide an answer based on its own way, its own style and methods. The mind, before giving its view, will search, observe, compare and conclude. It will look at the bird skilfully building its nest and the bees' wonderful activities in the hive and wonder in which school birds and bees learn these astonishing activities? Observation answers: the birds and the bees, and the majority of animals and insects, do not learn or train but are born with this deep seated innate knowledge called 'instinct'. Instinct strongly drives and moves animals to create these miracles, and only then do the mind and the human being start to wonder why they are born incapable of building beautiful houses and planting gardens without being taught or trained to do so. Why is man born incapable of walking and speaking, and why doesn't he innately carry his civilization within him like the bees and the ants? Why is he born left to his own devices, devoid of the prime instincts, in need of acquiring knowledge by himself step by step? Indeed, an animal is born bound with firm knowledge, i.e. instinct, and the human being is born unbound, i.e. free. He is the one expected to uncover knowledge over and over every time he is born. The solid knowledge that is innate in animals is an obligatory knowledge that they cannot avoid, abandon, change or renew in essence or in form. The beehive will remain a beehive until bees' extinction. Bees cannot make a different hive, intentionally refrain from making one, or live to make something else. This is an obligation that is devoid of freedom. The human being, on other hand, is not obliged by any kind of knowledge that would chain, restrict or force him to do something all his life in a particular way that he cannot avoid, change or divert from. The bee is born with a specific knowledge of its role in life because its purpose is obvious and specific. A child, on the other hand, is born without anyone's knowing what he will do in life because his purpose is unknown and undefined, unlike the bee and the ant. It is only the child's behaviour in life that will be the determining factor. The mind, thus, deduces from this observation and comparison that the determinism that is imposed on the bees and ants to do specific tasks in specific ways is not imposed on the human being, who was left free to face his destiny. Yet, this freedom that is left for the human being - is it absolute or restricted?

Perhaps the mind would agree with science, which is one of its sources and tools, that

human freedom is restricted, based on the freedom of movement in relation to matter. Newton, and Galileo before him, said that a moving body remains in motion in its course unless an external force intervenes. This is the famous law of self-limitation of matter, which can also apply to human freedom, meaning that human freedom remains in motion in its course unless an external force intervenes. And here we should ask the mind or science this complex question: what is this external force? From the viewpoint of the heart, or faith, the answer is simple. But the mind will always attempt to search for an answer in its material world, meaning that the mind will attempt to avoid the field of inner human emotion, which cannot be justified by logic. The mind will say that the external force is the sum of the direct or indirect external conflicting or resisting wills, in a simple or complex society. The mind can also resort to science to compare magnetic deviation and the deviations of the human will. It can also compare the field of human motion in society to that of electric magnetism in matter. The mind, therefore, comes up with explanations likely to be accepted by its factual logic for the external forces that affect the freedom of human motion. The mind may be persuaded, and even if it is not; it will continue to seek evidence and proof within its usual framework. As for the heart, it is persuaded without proof, as there is no need for evidence in the world of the heart and faith because proof here obviates persuasion. Persuasion itself is not a function of the heart because persuasion comes after doubt, but the heart does not doubt because it does not think, it feels; it suddenly lightens like a lantern.

The human heart sometimes feels an emotion that cannot be explained; it is neither alone nor free in this universe. Do you not sometimes feel that someone somewhere is staring at you? And if you raised your head and searched, you would indeed find that your emotion was true. Have you ever noticed once or twice in your life that a particular incident happened to you on a certain occasion that changed the course of your life in a certain way? You attempt to link it to a coincidence, but you fail because an external will has intervened in an orderly manner emanating from an awareness that is conscious of what it does and knows what it wants, in order to provoke specific results that would not have happened were it not for this unexpected external intervention. An external will that has all the elements of a sage and intelligent will which descends on your ordinary will and changes its direction and paints for it a new path. Sometimes your mind, regardless of the stability and precision of logic it may achieve, refuses to submit such incidents to the usual and simple logical explanation. Advocates of the mind and science can only nod their heads in such instances: and, as for the stubborn and fanatical, they cling to their reasoning because, in their view, the mind alone is God. As for me, I believe in the mind, science and freedom of the human being; however, I cannot deny the heart and

faith. I do not blame the mind for doubting because that is its function, i.e. motion. For if the mind is cut off from doubt in undertaking research and making its laws and stops its dynamic stirring of facts and results, its work become paralysed and its life ceases. The heart's function, on the other hand, is faith, i.e. stability. Let us then leave for the heart the stable truth that defies every solution and questions every explanation. Accordingly, my standpoint on human freedom is as follows: Man is free in his own direction until an external force intervenes; I sometimes call this 'divine forces'. Thus, the freedom of the human will, to me, is chained exactly like the freedom of movement of matter. The chaining of freedom is a notion that does not appeal to the majority of Europeans today because, as I said, they have given too much credence to the mind, to science, and to thought which, only deifies the human being in this universe. The critics' views were also evident in their commentaries that I have previously referred to. One of them has seen that my standpoint, although its conclusions do not contradict much of what modern generations suggest, expresses a doctrine that Europe has no right to mock. This critic said that my doctrine shows a tragedy of life that reveals the impotence of human freedom. The truth that I would like to confirm is that I am an 'equilibrant', meaning that man's will on one side is counterbalanced by a divine will on the other; and the human mind on one side is counterbalanced by faith on the other. With this equilibrium, man lives and operates. But before I developed and formulated my ideas based on the notion of equilibrium, I tried to explain my position about human freedom and his condition of solitude, as I wrote in my book *Fann al-Adab*:

I have observed and thought this issue through. The human being, to me, is not the God of this world and he is not free. He lives, desires and strives within a frame of divine will. This will, that sometimes reveals itself to human beings in hidden images in the form of barriers and chains, should be overcome through struggle. The prophets of the East themselves were sent by God and were challenged by obstacles put in their way. A prophet's path is not paved; he strives to deliver his message in the midst of impediments in the form of people's desires. Nowadays, the case of human freedom, as an individual or as a group, agrees and converges on the same conclusion: the denial of God and the denial of the hidden powers that affect human destiny. My feeling towards man's impotence against the forces that affect his fate is not due to pessimism. And I do not see in European theories of human freedom from fate anything that calls for optimism. The contrary is correct. Deifying man alone on earth was, in my opinion, one of the reasons that led to today's world disasters. The human being, who is free and God-like, with no companion and not ruled by fate, denying the presence of another on

earth and all powers other than his own, did not find guidance for his war drives and struggles aside from himself, so he turned on himself, fighting and destroying his own being. But, man's awareness of the superior powers that face him and affect his will and freedom pressure him in the end to gather his drives and activities of war and struggle, not against himself but against these dominating hindrances and invisible forces. I see man's impotence in the face of his destiny as an incentive for hard work and struggle, not for procrastination. *Ahl al-Kahf* strove against time, and one of the protagonists held onto life, fighting time with strong determination, with 'heart', till his last breath. Shahrazad strove to make her husband return to his senses as he renounced his land and dehumanized his actions. She struggled to restore his faith in his humanity. And Sulayman strove against the temptation of power, which almost silenced the voice of wisdom. This is how a human being always was to me: striving against hidden obstacles which affect his or her freedom, will and destiny.

If the contemporary European literature had shifted in this direction and had called for summoning human power against the hidden obstacles that chain his true freedom, there would have been in such thought some solutions for the crisis of humanity in the last century. The crisis of the human being today is his fight against himself, for he has no competitor other than himself. In his pride, man can no longer see anything other than his absolute freedom. He no longer sees the others' unseen powers that move his existence, manipulate his destiny, require his struggle and call for his thinking. European literature in this age does not want to take a direct, honest and sincere standpoint on the human being. Man has assumed, on the basis of this image, a theatrical costume of his fate and freedom, both with no limits, and has put a divine halo above his head, which shines deceptively. Regardless of the sincerity of his motives and the importance of his goals, there are consequences that threaten the truth of his insight. Now, that I have revealed to you my view-point on the position of the human being in the universe, on the basis that a human being conceives and feels the presence of a superior being, and realises that he has a free will within the framework of an external superior power, let us now move on to the status of the human being in society, his condition and awareness. What is this human being expected to create?

He is, as I mentioned, not like a bee whose job is innate in it from beginning to end. No, all in all, he has been endowed with a thinking machine capable of growing, and a feeling machine capable of developing as well. What does he do and which direction does he take? Surely, he needs guidance and a model. This model is his realisation that a superior being exists. This realisation is his guide that leads him in his human path of life. This is his motive for

progress. This realisation of a superior being is not, to me, a simple religious doctrine but rather a human necessity, similar in status to that of animals' realisation of the existence of stronger beings. Animals' realisation of stronger beings is what leads them to discover the source of their own power, its development, and to prepare for the moment of confrontation and encounter. If we assumed that an animal lived alone on a desert island, felt secure in it, did not feel any other power other than its own, and did not feel the need to use or compare it to another, there would have been the potential for such a power to wither and disappear. For animals, the feeling of the presence of a stronger being stimulates power, just as the feeling of the presence of the superior, for human beings, stimulates transcendence. The evolutionary theory of Lamarck, Darwin and Spencer is not valid with regard to human existence without the realisation of the superior being. The growth of the human being's mind and heart is a condition for this realisation according to the rule that dictates the evolution of the organ according to the function. This is the human necessity that I realised on the basis that the human being is not alone in this universe. This necessity is what leads him to realise himself, discover the sources of his mental and spiritual strength, and develop and prepare it to face those mysteries and hidden forces that impress his mind and enchant his core. In this realisation, discovery and development, the human being progresses and changes, to transcend his or her being stage by stage, individually and socially.

The human being, indeed, has developed according to his realisation of the superior using his mind and heart. But the development of the heart's faith has ceased, as I mentioned and the mental thought has continued to progress alone, making vast and impressive leaps which have caused the new age to forget the original form of a superior being, or the notion of the divine, for only the victorious mind is in sight. This imbalance of equilibrium between the development of thought and faith has obstructed the human path away from complete transcendence. This human path was also hindered by another imbalance between the development of the individual and the development of society. I have told you that the human being is not subject to the obligations that the ants and bees are bound by. A human being is created free, his work is conditioned and his direction is determined by the circumstances that tie him to life. And regardless of the presence of another force that affects the human will, this force does not obliterate the human free will in its many forms. As long as the human being has at least some degree of free will, he is responsible because responsibility stems from freedom. Unlike the human being, the bee or the ant is not responsible for its work because it was born with it.

Whenever human responsibility is mentioned, good and the evil are mentioned. Good

and evil are the positive and the negative in the electricity of human relations. In my opinion, good and evil do not make sense for individuals; they only exist in a social context. For if we assume the presence of a person on an island, with no one else but himself and fruit trees from which he eats, then good and evil do not exist on such an island. But if we assume that another person landed on this island and they lived together, good and evil would be born to live with them. Perhaps one of them picks a fruit that the other desires or the latter forcefully takes it or steals it. In another case, one of them may fall ill and the other may nurse and help him. Goodness is, thus, an act of will that leads to benefiting the other, while evil is an act of will that harms another. Neither good nor evil exists without the existence of the other. Hence, the other's existence is necessary, or in other words, the existence of society is vital for the existence of good and evil. Neither existed with the human being, but they existed with society; or to put it rightly, after the birth of society, and here I mean by "society" the coming together of two people or more. Here we should ask ourselves: which was born first, good or evil? In my opinion, good and evil are like day and night; they are counterbalanced without our knowing which is prior to the other. Perhaps evil was the original characteristic of a human being because it is connected to the basic human Conscience: which is the awareness of oneself and the love of oneself. This love of oneself is an instinct that is present in all living beings, including human beings. It drives them to fulfil their being even if it means harming others. And the more primitive and barbarian a society is, the more these instinctive drives are unleashed without consideration of harm caused to others. But society, in its development towards order, saw that harming others must be counterbalanced and equalised by an act of goodness, which is benefiting others. Whenever society is refined, benefiting others takes an important position amongst the general attitudes where goodness is championed and evil is loathed. Society knows that an act of goodness needs an invitation and encouragement because loving another being is much harder and more difficult for a human being than loving oneself. Goodness is the product of spirit and discipline, but evil is the product of instinct and nature. The consequence of a distorted commercial image that has presented the relationship between good and evil in an artificial fashion has caused social divisions between good and bad people, innocent and criminal. This division is to the benefit of neither the human being nor society. In consequence, this division has created an imaginary chasm between human beings and stigmatised a minority with a reputation that can never vanish. In addition to paralysing parts of society and making it impotent, this also contradicts the reality of things. One of the foreign critics has noticed that my theatre is based on defining a person's positions not according to good and evil but rather according to truth and reality. That is true, for I have never created

persons who belong to absolute good or absolute evil. I refuse this idea and have always refused it in everything I have written. I have refused the idea of a heavenly form of absolute goodness. Review my short story *Taryd min al-Jannah*, where you will find that the prophets and messengers have themselves been exposed to God's reproach, and God cannot be reproach goodness.

The human being, to me, has a constant value that can be affected by changeable circumstances of good and evil, and health and illness. The person who can bring harm to another can also bring good to another person by committing a beneficial act. Hence, a person is neither good nor evil, and neither healthy nor ill in his normal circumstances. This is a state of equilibrium where there is a counterbalance between various changeable things. If a human being is in a state of illness, he is working on his treatment to regain his health. The human being is only a piece in a changeable world. No sooner does he fall into a specific condition than he starts moving towards another that is in opposition to or counterbalances it. He does not remain in one condition for long unless through artificial means. A person who remains in an evil condition more than is necessary and continues to harm others is in most cases the fault of society for hindering the person from counterbalancing an evil deed with an act of goodness. This is perhaps why I see that the notion of good and evil must change in the eyes of society. Society rather than taking an attitude of an avenger towards the evil doer must take the position of demanding a state of equilibrium, i.e. it must require him to do good deeds. On this basis, the notion of punishment must change. Punishing the evil doer by imprisonment, meaning depriving the person of freedom, is a wrong idea. Human freedom must always belong to the person and the price of crime must be paid, not at the expense of human freedom, but by doing positive work that matches and counterbalances the wrong actions. A person who commits an evil act, i.e. who commits a voluntary act that harms another, must pay the price in the form of a voluntary act that benefits another. If the wrong-doer pays the price by giving up smoking, food and having contact with his family and relatives, this will be a negative process that will bring no benefit to others. A wrong-doer will only suffer from the consequences that could lead him to lose his humanity and transform him into a human monster. In his confinement, he trains to retaliate against the community that stigmatised him as a criminal. This explains to us how prisons have been able to breed a dangerously skilful model of professional criminals, and continue to do so in different nations regardless of their sophistication.

The notion of seclusion from society carries within it a danger for society. A society that excludes a person, even for a short period of time, transforms the person into a hostile enemy. The expulsion of evil-doers from society and gathering of them in one place forms a

tie between them and leads them to form a different society among themselves. This criminal society will be dominated by other teachings that conflict with general society's social norm. This is how the process of division takes place in a single society where people are divided into either good or bad, according to law and norms and not according to reality and truth. For there are also amongst society guilty people and wrong-doers who do not get arrested or fall under the authority of the law. These members have led normal lives with their families and relatives in a society where they had full rights and freedom. Sometimes they commit acts of evil and at other times acts of goodness until one state takes over the other. If goodness prevails and benefits others, society approves of them, but if evil prevails, and they show harm to others, they are called to account. This account makes them professional criminals solely if it takes the form of imprisonment, as in the case we previously referred to: meaning a cage where monsters train to sharpen the claws of crime. Thus, my opinion is that we should rethink the method of judgement and punishment, except for the death penalty for intentional killing, for that must always remain; not because it is a punishment, but because it is a natural way. According to the laws of equilibrium, nothing counterbalances a human life other than another human life. As for the rest of crimes that a human being is punished for by being deprived of freedom, i.e. by imprisonment or captivity, they are the ones for which punishment should change based on balanced foundations. This balanced foundation should not be between freedom and evil but rather between good and evil. In other words, a person who commits an act that harms another must counterbalance the evil act with one that benefits others. Based on this notion, prisons should be abolished and instead of them factories and production units should take their place. Whoever commits an evil act should be sentenced to carry out an act that would benefit society without resorting to expulsion, exclusion from family and relatives or deprivation of freedom to lead a normal life. All that is asked of him is to pay the price of the evil action committed. The wrong-doer must produce for the benefit of society enough to counterbalance the evil he committed in terms of time, magnitude and quantity. This positive process is more beneficial for society than the negative and sterile notion of imprisonment. It is also dignifying for the guilty because it keeps him amongst society and family meaning in one's righteous environment, leading towards repentance and in the direction of goodness.

The presence of good and evil leads to the existence of conscience. Conscience is specific to human beings because good and evil are not known to animals. Animals may benefit or harm, but due to instinct and not will. When the will is absent, responsibility is absent as well, and when responsibility for good and evil is absent, their meaning is absent as well. Conscience, like good and evil, must exist with the existence of others, namely society. A

human being secluded on a deserted island lives without conscience because he lives without good, evil or the other. But what is conscience? Is it simply the feeling that identifies evil as evil and good as good? How can we describe the feeling of relief when one kills for revenge whilst aware that the deed he or she is committing is evil? Or the feeling of contentment when one steals from the rich to barely survive? There must be a necessary element for conscience to exist. This element is the feeling of personal guilt. It is an evil doer's feeling that he has committed an act that harms another and this act is worth fixing. Conscience, thus, is one's awareness of the evil that has been committed against another against another and has *not* been rectified. The guilty person who is punished for his crime or repents enough does not hear the voice of conscience in the depth of his soul. Conscience does not speak unless to remind one of the debts to others, or in other words to remind the soul that the evil that was committed must be counterbalanced by good. This feeling of restoring balance is according to ethics referred to as "justice". Justice is the moralistic appearance of balance, and conscience is, thus, the feeling of justice, or more accurately: The self's feeling that justice has not been done towards others.

Conscience is not only present in individuals, but it is also present in society. Society can also perceive a feeling that justice has not been done towards another party, or towards a particular group that has been harmed by another. Here, social revolutions occur to correct the situation and restore the state of equilibrium that is called justice or social justice. In the field of ethics, conscience individual or collective is the guard entrusted with calling for justice, i.e. balance. In the field of politics and economics, the guards are divine laws that work in their own way, like the laws of instincts for animals and plants. In international politics, there must always be balance: namely a counterbalance of power. Rarely in history has a single nation monopolized power in the world for a long time. When the Roman Empire almost ruled the world, it was divided into two forces, one in Rome under the rule of Octavius and another in Alexandria under the rule of Antonius. The same scenario repeated itself in the Christian age when the Western Roman nation took over Rome and the Eastern Roman nation took over Constantinople, and so on. And in internal politics there must always be equilibrium: meaning a counterbalance between the power of the ruler and the ruled. Even in the age of absolute government, the power of the ruled has always found itself an outlet or a way through the clergy or the intellectuals. When the people in modern ages were able to rule themselves, the power of absolute government was divided into various powers in the form of parties. These parties counterbalanced and checked each other so that they could exist and express the wills of those they represented. If a group triumphs in the end and engulfs all enemies from other groups and

social classes, uniting in a single power to include a whole nation, then this power is also responsible for the birth of a hidden conflicting power that is striving to come to the surface. Although this power may be suppressed, defeated or fail, it must one day exist, because the law of equilibrium that we see in the process of inhaling and exhaling is what applies here too. We can see its representation in the existence of the balance of movement which is the rule of life.

In economics, the law of equilibrium is strict in its application. There must always be a counterbalance between supply and demand, just like the counterbalance between inhaling and exhaling. If supply increases beyond demand, the value of the merchandise vanishes. And if demand increases drastically compared with supply, the price of the merchandise increases and the market suffocates. Thus, equilibrium returns in two ways: either demand is increased so that the price counterbalances out and the natural movement of the market is restored, or the product becomes scarce allowing another law to emerge: namely the law of compensation. The law of compensation dictates that other merchandise, similar in function to the scarce one, will take its place in the supply market. The situation is somewhat similar in commerce where there is a counterbalance between imports and exports, and in the counterbalance of budget between revenues and expenses, and so on. The economy is nothing but a counterbalance between different factors that are always dynamic in a financial entity whether for an individual or a nation. Thus, if the equilibrium is disrupted for a short period of time, it must restore itself by itself on the basis of its own laws.

Equilibrium has its own effective tool that it always uses in every aspect: whether in science, ethics, art, thought, politics, or economics, etc. This tool is what I call a “reaction”. Every action has its own reaction and this reaction is nothing but an attempt to restore a balance to an action that may have been exaggerated, disturbed or has exceeded its limitation. The true meaning of reaction is the re-balancing of an action that has veered to an extreme. Equilibrium, therefore, works according to two *dynamic* factors: reaction and compensation. The cases of compensation are amongst the obvious things that we see in all creatures. For example, every weakness is compensated with strength and every shortage is counterbalanced by a corresponding increase. The bee has delicate wings, yet it has a sharp sting. Also, a person who is heavy in weight and body mass often has a light sense of humour and spirit, while the one who lacks facial or bodily beauty is often rich in the beauty of the soul, mind or other qualities. Thus, equilibrium must take place in any possible form because, as we said, every action has a reaction and every shortage must be met by an increase to balance it. Evil and weakness, shortage and ugliness are all characteristics in creatures that cannot exist without their counterbalances. The problem is that the conscious creature the human being is the only

creature who often ignores this truth; if exposed to one of the latter cases, he falls into despair and cannot discover the counterbalancing forces that exist within him without his knowledge. At the same time an instinctive creature, an animal or a plant, will not despair or become static, but rather it will realise with instinctive knowledge where to find the balancing force. I previously referred to the role of intellectuals whilst talking about the balance between the power of the ruler and the ruled as the conduit through which the power of the ruled manifests itself in an era of absolute authority. This may invite us to wonder: what is thought and what is authority?

For us to answer this question, we must go back to imagine the isolated person on a deserted island, and ask ourselves how this person spends his life. Without a doubt, this person must work in the day to provide food, clothes and shelter; for he picks fruit from trees, makes a hut from twigs and weaves clothes from fibre. In other words, he continues to perform the duties necessary for a material life. Yet, if the time comes for him to rest under the shade and gaze at the clear sky, he starts thinking of his situation, saying to himself: What then? Who am I and what is the meaning of my life? Am I satisfied? Indeed, I have beautiful things around me, but what is beauty? Is it my awareness of creation that fills me with joy? Since I am aware of such impressive creations, I am experiencing something else: longing. I long to be in a state that pleases me and fills me with joy, a better form, since I am aware of what is best for me. I do not entirely like my present, hence I criticise my situation. But what better form do I wish to be? Firstly, this hut must become more spacious and higher so I can contemplate the sea from it. I also have to swim in the sea. Therefore, I need to build a boat, because by making a boat I would be able to know about everything around the island and its beaches. I may even be able to discover another nearby island, etc. This is the thought process, and such thinking may drive this man to action the next day to fulfil indeed all or some of what he thought about. He may face hindrances or difficulties that divert him from fulfilling his ideas. In this case, mere daily work seems sufficient, and the person sits mocking his thoughts and criticising himself for questioning his situation. Therefore, either thought succeeds in driving action, or action succeeds in suffocating thought.

If we assume that another person has landed on the island, creating a small community with the two living side by side, one stronger in action and the other in thought, what would happen? There is no doubt that one would influence the other. This influence would differ in extent and character according to the dominance of each of them. Either action dominates thought and makes it submit to its will, or thought dominates action submitting it to its will. Alternatively, the dominance of each towards the other is kept in balance, avoiding an unfair

unilateral dominance. If we moved from a small community on an island to bigger communities of nations and societies, we would find a struggle between these two forces, the force of action and the force of thought: a struggle which constitutes a big part of human history. Action, since the olden days, is represented by the material authority that is indeed responsible for people's affairs. Thought, on the other hand, is represented by the spiritual authority that perceives, criticises and opens for the people new horizons that may lead to human development. Perhaps the first manifestations of the authority of action are kings and the authorities of spirituality are clergymen. The conflict between the two, the authority of action and the authority of spirituality is known since the olden days. Intellectuals, from philosophers, poets and scientists to writers and artists, because of their weakness, poverty and disunity, may in the olden days have had to serve the rich and the powerful, mostly kings. The clergy, however, continued to strive until their dominance weakened with the weakness of religion itself, especially in the modern ages, as a result of scientific progress and the decline of spirituality. Scientific and mental progress has restored the lost authority of intellectuals. Intellectuals consequently began to emerge as an independent power in a democratic framework which submitted kings, enlightened people and enabled intellectuals to acquire an intellectual legacy which guaranteed their continuation. The new era was no longer an era of struggle between kings and clergies. What happened in our present day then to the power of action and thought? The answer to this question sums up the spirit of the present age. The power of action today is represented by rulers from the people themselves, who reach power through parties and elections. And whether the authority is in the hands of various parties who act as representatives, or in the hands of a single party that dominates it alone, the nations today rule themselves by themselves. When it is said that a nation rules itself, this means of course that it has chosen its ruler from amongst its people. These individuals are those who represent the action force. This modern situation has not changed the hidden feeling that action has towards thought. The power of action, represented in "implementation", always hates and fears the power of thought, represented in "criticism and guidance". Action, in every era, attempts to oblige thought to obey. In the era of royalty, when the clergy were the ones who criticised and guided the ruling of kings, the kings always strove to quiet the loud voices of dissent which were against their will. Sometimes they are willing and submitting, other times, they are threatened and afraid, and other times they seize forcibly spiritual power and declare that they are the true heads of religion.

In the new age, thought is exposed to danger, but in a new form. Democratic ruling, or the rule of the people, cannot in all cases forcibly suppress the voice of free thought, but it can repeal it by luring it into the practical political arena. Whenever an intellectual enters such an

arena, criticism, guidance and explanation are repealed and he becomes part of a specific system that he follows, adheres to and obeys. Only then can a political party avoid free thought that defies its will, and gain an obedient soldier who conforms to its orders. This luring of thought in order for it to fall into the arena of action takes place in the modern age through skilful traps. These traps come in the form of literary and philosophical theories that all lead in the end to thought submitting to action in such a way that it becomes detrimental to its survival, or subjecting to it in a way that eliminates its self-identity. Some of the leading authors of these theories are intellectuals who did not intend to harm thought, they themselves have diverted due to various influences. One of these influences is their nostalgia for the power of work which caused them to lose trust in the power of thought, especially in an age where materialism has reached its peak and where wars have ravaged values and shaken systems. The destructive effects of all this have penetrated the hearts of groups and individuals, and every individual on earth has become eager to find a solution for this problem and an answer to this question. Intellectuals, consequently, feel that their mission has become more burdensome and their responsibilities have increased. They fear that the pen in their hands is not sufficient to provide adequate solutions. This shaken faith in the power of thought has led some intellectuals to follow one of the parties. This transforms the intellectual into a man of action whose thought changes as he becomes an advocate for a specific political party. Other intellectuals find themselves in confusion, torn between different parties and striving in multiple fields, in relation to multiple concerns and disappointments. Intellectuals end up either forming a party of their own where they can confine their thought, or they hire their thought out or they donate it to the service of all political and governmental fields. In all these scenarios, we see the intellectual weakened, doubtful and defeated. He abandoned his position in fear, rushing to join the scientific authorities. In this way, we see the intellectual forsaking his true message which considers thought an independent force equal to and in counterbalance with the force of action. This counterbalance between the two forces is invalidated if one engulfs the other. Since the olden days, the fear has always been for thought because action (or governance) is the strongest and it has always tended to engulf thought. The duty of the intellectual, therefore, is to preserve the entity that maintains the existence of thought, to protect its independence and freedom, and to defend it against the enemy, because it is the only guarantee on this earth today that can stand against the deviation of the power of action which is both dominating and devastating.

But does the freedom of thought and its independence mean that it becomes isolated and separated, as has often been asserted? No, independence of thought is one thing, and isolation is another. The isolated individual is not affected nor does he affect, since he is a non-

living being with regard to others, namely society. As for thought that is isolated from action, it is similar to thought that has been engulfed by action; neither exists. What is meant by independence of thought is that it has its own special existence and will in opposing action so that it can be influenced with it and by it. You may ask me: Why do we separate thought from action? Can they not merge together and unite? My answer is that this is impossible because when they merge and unite, they become one thing, which is action.

Let us consider a simple example. You are thinking of travelling to the countryside for pleasure. If you indeed travel, your thought has changed into an action. If you do not travel, then what happened is merely a thought. If thought merged and united with action, this means that you have travelled: namely thought became an action. There is no longer thought and action, but only action because thought would have ceased and been engulfed by the action. You may say that: Every action is the result of a previous thought. That is correct. Action is a thought that has been frozen into action, or a will that has been frozen in a final form. Thought is a manifestation of free will and is dynamic, adaptable and evolving. When you think of travelling to the countryside for pleasure, you can change this will and move it progressively as you wish, but if this will is transformed into action by the act of travel, then the thought that was free and dynamic has become fixed by its very implementation. An action is a will that has frozen, has taken shape in accordance with and become committed to an exclusive mode. Commitment, thus, is one of the characteristics of action and freedom is one of the characteristics of thought. And thought that is committed becomes an action. This is exactly what happens in political and social parties, as manifested in the parties' programmes: namely political or social doctrine is thought that has become tied or committed to a single party. An intellectual joining a specific party means that he or she is tied down or committed to the thought of this party; such a commitment conflicts with the freedom which is the heart of his or her intellectual message, because his or her commitment to the party's principles deprives them of the exercise of the intellectual authority of control and review. This free authority is the basis for his or her true responsibility. In this case, he or she must choose from different scenarios: either to submit to the party willingly and give up being an intellectual to become a man of action, or to persist and persevere in the role of an intellectual and continue to question the party's thought, to guide it and develop it freely as part of the responsibilities of a free intellectual. In this case, the intellectual would find that he or she has become separated from the party, disqualified or rejected.

The weakness of most intellectuals in the present age, that is, their collapsed faith in their message and its influence, has tied thought to the wheel of action and meant that their

pens are at the service of governments as the balance and equality between these two forces has become disrupted. Perhaps the disruption in balance between the power of thought and the power of action is one of the reasons for the disasters that threaten this new age. In the absence of an opposing spiritual or intellectual power that restores things to their rightful form, the dominance of the power of action in this world and its inclination towards enslavement, occupation, control and destructive wars is without a doubt one of the world's important sources of anxiety, filling spirits with a feeling that leads people into the abyss. Now, we are aware of the two poles of human activity, which are thought and action. We asked: Why does each of them have to keep its individual power in accordance with the doctrine of equilibrium, until balance occurs between them? This is because balance is what reins them in, restrains them and prevents the tyranny that spoils human being. Let us limit the conversation here to the subject of "thought", or more specifically to the area that concerns us the most, which is literature and art. Here, we also find that the doctrine of equilibrium assesses literature and art on the basis of two forces that must be in counterbalance, which are the powers of expression and explanation. The impact of literature or art is not complete in its creation or duty unless there is a counterbalance between the force of expression and the force of explanation. But what is meant here by expression? Is it the style? No, it is not only style but something more than that. Let me give you a simple example:

Let us assume that you heard a story told by two different persons, one spoken in layman's terms and the other spoken with sophistication and skill. This same story, hence, took two different forms. In the first case, the story is told as an incident whilst in the second; the incident took a lively form and seemed colourful, lively and dynamic. This is the power of expression. It is not, however, merely based on the style of presentation or emphasis, because style cannot stand alone without the incident itself. Expression, then, is not simply the form but the form and content together. It is the form and the content shaped into it. It is the story and the style in which the story is told. Style without the story does not mean anything in itself, nor does it express anything. Expression, thus, requires style and content together, because for one to express something there must certainly be something to express in the first place. The power of expression is, thus, a balance between the power of style and the power of content. If one overcame the other, one would feel right away that something was wrong. A skilful style and a trivial content trigger a feeling of artificiality. And the word "artificiality" here is not used metaphorically or simply as a literary description, but rather with an almost material meaning. The literary author or the artist who exaggerates in highlighting a trivial topic creates something unnecessary, like a person who dresses into a party dress just to sit alone in a room to eat a loaf

of bread. Artificiality is as ugly in style as it is in life, because the condition of aesthetics is that it triggers in the soul a feeling that springs naturally. The skill of the artist is always to bring about such a natural feeling. If people feel that the artist's source of beauty is an artificial one, he or she has failed. The same applies if the topic overshadows the style. A great topic in a weak style triggers a feeling of lament, just like a person who inserts a pearl in a ring made of tin. Hence, the imbalance in both cases between the power of style and the power of content causes a feeling that the situation is not natural. You may ask: What is style in literature and art? And what is content? A style is one's own special way of impressing the other with feeling and thought; the other must see, feel and understand what you intend.

This method in literature and art is based on aptitude, acquired learning and personal effort. There must be some talent alongside a thorough study of past and present styles and methods. Finally, there must be one's individual action of balancing between imitation and creativity. Excessive imitation makes you add nothing to your predecessors, and excessive creativity makes you sever the ties between you and the others, breaking your work from the natural cycle of the life of literature or the history of art. This is what Shakespeare and Beethoven did with respect to creativity and imitation. The subject of literature and art is all that you can use to raise people's awareness, without exaggeration, frivolousness or tackiness. There are no specific features of a great or trivial topic. A topic's value depends on the author or artist's appraisal. Either of them, the literary author or the artist, may address with great magical talent a topic that we, the public, may consider trivial and present it with a pen or a brush or hammer or a musical note as something that may interest people of the present generation and the generations to come. A topic has no specific feature that determines its greatness or triviality until after it is in a literary or an artistic frame. A flower, a vase or an apple may be a great or a trivial topic depending on how the artist deals with it, in other words, depending on the artist's experience, feelings and ability to reach the truth behind things, or according to the method that the artist chooses to use. For example, the story of *Hamlet* could have been presented by a normal author in a trivial way, or as humorously and lightly as the story of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, if Shakespeare had chosen it as a subject for his frivolous comedy instead of an intellectual play. Shakespeare, thanks to his artistic instinct, was aware of the significance of balance between style and content, for if he wanted to present something in a serious style, he adapted his plays accordingly, while if he wanted to present something in a humorous manner, he adapted his style to present fewer of his complex ideas. When Shakespeare wanted thought to shine as a pearl to cast light on truths about the universe, he would present it in a profound stylistic foundation. Yet if he wished to bring laughter to his

audience, as he believed that laughter can ease the troubles of life, he would use a gentle and simple style.

If Shakespeare had done the contrary and written *Hamlet* in the style of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, he would have been like a jeweller who cannot tell the difference between a jewel and a ring. What is meant by style here is not solely of course the language used, but also the forms of images and styles it carried within it. The artist's style, or character, is without a doubt constant in its general features, yet it changes in its consistency or density according to the artistic work it produces. The character of Shakespeare is the same in all his work, but the density in his style differs from one play to another. In Beethoven's case, the character of his music is the same yet again the density differs in some of his symphonies. The density, gentleness, depth and lightness are all factors that change like day and night, autumn and spring, depending on the artist and without any logical order. Some may believe that an artist ought to start his or her life with humour and end it with depth. An artist, however, is not subject to any logic; Shakespeare, for instance, after impressing us with his depth in *Hamlet*, made us laugh in *All's Well That Ends Well*; while Beethoven not only presented a philosophical spirit in his great fifth symphony, but also merged the eighth symphony with a light gentle breeze. The artist, hence, does not follow a straight line, since progress in his or her view is not the direct transformation from good to better or from deep to deeper. Similar to nature's progression, an artist's progress is a product of personal experimentation in accord with the laws of action and reaction. In other words, a progression through mixed experimentations that reveals one's capabilities in different ways. An action and a reaction are both tools of experimentation that reveal possibilities, not only for the human being, but for all creatures as well.

Trees, for instance, transform from a green colour in spring to a fading colour in autumn, then return again to green and so on. It may seem to us that the tree revolves around itself. The revolving motion is in itself a proof of life, as it is the force behind progress: meaning a progress that appears in successive generations of trees. The situation is similar to the status of the earth and other planets. Life does not progress in a straight line, but rather it revolves firstly around itself, and then around the sun. Yet, life follows an order in the cosmos amongst other celestial bodies. This also applies to humanity since civilisation moves forward by action and reaction; sometimes civilisation falls into darkness or returns to light in a similar motion to that of night and day; regardless, it continues towards progress. The word "progress", therefore, does not mean in relation to human nature, thought and art the process of moving forward, steadily and directly, but rather a progress through experimentation and hindrances due to actions and reaction. All human beings, earth and planets progress whilst revolving. We

reach tomorrow through a revolving path similar to that of night and day, darkness and light. This notion of progress accordingly is evident in my play *Shahrazad*. Even though who could possibly know the truth of what we call light and darkness, rise and decline, depth and shallowness, density and gentleness, they may all well be, with their differences, necessary movements for life to be called “life”. And also, it may all well be in the field of literature and art, necessary elements that contribute to forming “expression”.

The skill of expression for a literary author or an artist cannot reveal all its rays, colours and tunes if only a single note is played no matter how strong, eloquent and pure the note is. What would we have preferred and what would human art prefer? Is it for Shakespeare to have produced plays similar to *Hamlet* in style, thought and sophistication? Or would we have preferred Shakespeare to have articulated for us a variety of expressions where there was humour, philosophy, poetry and sarcasm? Shakespeare’s greatness stems from his ability to have presented all genres and skilfully mastered the manner of expression whereby he produced every colour, tone, sound and, laughter; this is what “expression” really means. Its power resides not only in its sophistication, but also in its amplitude. Expression, without a doubt, is everything from the perspective of art. It is not; however, everything from the standpoint of the equilibrium doctrine, as the power of expression must be in literature and arts in tandem with the power of explanation. But what is explanation?

It is the light that is shed on the situation of the human being in the universe and in society. Equilibrist literature or art must have a balance between the power of expression and the power of explanation. The power of expression alone is not enough, because it may reveal simply its own existence and may not shed light on the existence of any other. The power of expression is similar to a pearl, its beauty is trapped and shines on nothing else but itself. It is not like a shiny diamond that would sparkle in the dark to reveal things other than its own presence. The literary author or the artist may express life, but not explain it; he or she may describe the way it is or its beauty in an artificial fashion or intentionally distort it. In all these cases, the artist may sometimes want playfully to experiment with expression and at other times may want to use it for publicity. But stopping at the limitations of expression is not the role of an equilibrist literary author or artist because expression alone, with its heightened literary and artistic value, may confine the targets of literature and art in a disciplinary spiritual frame or as personal entertainment. No matter how noble and adequate these targets are, what is required from the literary author or the artist, especially in the modern age, is to stretch their message further beyond this frame. What is required from the artist is to refine, entertain and, at the same time, shed a revealing and guiding light on the path of humanity.

Literature or art must be expressive and explanatory: meaning that in a work of literature or art, both the power of expression and the power of explanation are counterbalanced. If the power of expression overcame explanation, a vital part of the literary author or the artist's message would not reach the public. And if the power of explanation overcame expression, the very essence of literature and art would be threatened. Therefore, in short, a literary author or an artist must first find a great and skilful style before looking into the message that he or she will convey. A literary or artistic work would be complete only with the presence of expression which includes style and subject, or form and content. As for explanation, it is a message that a literary or artistic effect expresses to humanity to present the artist or the author's view on the situation of the human being in the universe and society. Not every literary or artistic effect carries an explanation or a message. The impact of literary or artistic messages was simply through the greatness in their expression. Al-Buhturi, for instance, uses expression, whilst Abu al 'Alaa combines both, expression and explanation, because much of his poetry bring to us his view on the status of the human being and his fate. And Shakespeare in his flirtatious poetry uses expression, while in his plays like Hamlet and others he combines both, explanation and expression. Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata* is expressive, while in his third symphony he conveys to us his view on human beings and heroism, in the fifth symphony he presents his thought on the human condition and destiny, and finally in the ninth symphony and many of his concerts, he wants to express to us more than just a fine melody. Expression alone can lead to "art for art's sake" if one exaggerates beauty of the form and the sophistication of the construction at the expense of meaning and content. Expression alone can also lead to "committed art", if one exaggerates by committing to a specific meaning or a specific content and not to freedom and independence. Art for art's sake is imprisoning the artist in the skeleton of form and committed art is imprisoning the artist in the prison of content. Prison in both cases prevents the artist from delivering his message fully, a message that always springs from freedom to promise freedom.

You may ask me after that: Does freedom in literature or in art conflict with commitment? Isn't the literary author or the artist committed to an opinion that he defends and delivers to people? As long as we say that literature and art are expressive and explanatory in the message they carry to humanity, how can a message be without commitment in its delivery? Without a doubt, carrying a message surely means that one is committed to delivering it: and yet the difference is always the source of the message that the free artist or author ought to carry. Is it right for the free intellectual to carry a message that was issued by the authority of action? In this case, he is merely a geared machine, not a thinking tool. And if the free thinker

believes in this message, is it possible for him to commit himself to it? In my opinion, the answer is yes. But from another perspective: long-term faith is an infirmity for thought because correct thought is dynamic thought. This dynamic movement of thought means its freedom to doubt, namely freedom to review values and conditions. Hence, to what extent is the intellectual allowed to review the message that he is committed to carrying? If he is told: You cannot review, discuss or analyse what you committed to, this means that thought is abolished and is replaced by faith. We are then facing a problem: long-term commitment to a specific opinion leads to faith, and faith leads to the disruption of thought. My opinion is that thought must be dynamic for the intellectual to be present. If the intellectual decides to rethink and question his commitment, then he is released from this commitment. Therefore, when an obligatory opinion springs from an authority of action, dominating authority, the questioning of commitment is not permitted or encouraged. In this situation opinion becomes a quasi-faith. Faith in Holy Scriptures, however, is acceptable because it is all concerned with a higher topic in a different realm than thought. When we believe in the idea of God, we accept the disruption of the nature and judgement of our thought and we confine ourselves to the realm of faith. This is due to our belief that our human knowledge is not an adequate tool to recognise the laws of that which is above humanity. Why is our thought disrupted when faced with a ruling authority, or the authority representing action in the country, and why do we commit to the authority's views, believing in it with a faith that does not accept scrutiny, discussion or review?

Long-term commitment, therefore, when in relation to human authority, is a kind of faith that must not be imposed by one human being on another. As for the commitment that is, in my view, allowed for an intellectual, an author or an artist, it is one that does not disrupt free thought or stop it from discussion or review at any time, whether this commitment emanates from a specific or general message, or is addressed to the whole nation or a specific party. I have presented before my standpoint regarding the notion of commitment in literature. I said in my book *Fann al-Adab* that the author must be free. If an author sold his opinion or restrains his soul, he loses right away the status of an author. Freedom is the well-spring of art and without freedom, there would be no literature or art, because whoever were to say to an author or an artist "commit to this otherwise you will regret it", it would be the end for the artist. The author or artist's commitment is something that springs free from the depth of the heart. If commitment did not spring freely from his heart, environment and beliefs, neither you nor any power in the world can bind him. Commitment must be part of the author or artist's essence. In my opinion, a fruitful commitment is one that springs naturally, here commitment does not conflict with freedom. You may ask me to what extent my opinion here conforms to what I

have written. I would tell you to go back to my book *Fann al-Adab*. I mentioned in it that the situation is very different in relation to my personal production, as even though I call for freedom, much of my written work is committed literature. Since I started writing, I have not ever tried to create for myself a beautiful style characterised by an abundance of terminologies, but rather a good explanation which appeals to the reader. This style of “art for art's sake” is something that I have not thought of practising. I wanted to use the style to serve other aims and not just for entertainment. These aims, as clearly appeared to people, were national, popular and reforming in ‘*Awdat al- Ruh*, ‘*Usfur min al-Sharq*, *Yawmiyat Na'ib fi al-Aryaf* and *Masrah-al- Mujtama*’ and so on. It was a doctrine that was attached to human destiny in *Ahl al- Kahf*, *Shahrazad*, *Sulayman al-Hakim*, *Pygmalion* and *Al- Malik Udib* etc. These plays were not written to reveal the beauty of legends per se, as in the case of *Majnun Layla* of Ahmad Shawqi which revealed the beauty of poetry, feelings and emotions and showed the greatness of art for art's sake. These legends and tales were tools to convey another aim, namely the special case of the human being and his destiny. I personally did not write only to express, but also to explain. Perhaps *Awdat al- Ruh* represents the life of a humble family in the district of al-Sayyidah Zeynab, where lively personas live in the heart of the environment, which seems sufficient to be art because creating life is art. I committed myself, however, to providing a specific explanation for the Egyptian spirit. My tale did not simply end in expression and description of an environment of personas, but rather it took a position that reflected a certain opinion. This opinion has been grasped by foreign critics from different angles. One critic in particular, Jean Destieu said:

We are dealing with a work that has been characterised by Moris Price¹⁹ as a tale of national activity that has only a single explanation which is that the returning spirit is the ancient spirit of the Egyptian peasants in the countryside.

And the left-wing author Marcel Martinet said: “It is apparent that there are some elements of a kind of literature that is aimed at under privileged classes or at least, without a doubt, a popular literature.” The writer Therese Mirbane said that “the book ‘*Awdat al-Ruh* is not a product of imagination, but rather a work that describes the social condition of a nation at rapid development.” *Awdat al-Ruh* is not a tale that describes life, as it is a tale that explains life. For an author to explain the lives of people, he or she must take a specific standpoint towards these people. The notion of ancient sediments that accumulated over many

¹⁹ I attempted to transliterate as close as possible all foreign names mentioned by the author in the original Arabic text but some were misspelled and so may be different from what I have restored to using here.

civilizations in the hearts of Egyptian people, and created in them a hidden force that comes to their aid in crisis and return spirit to them whenever they are in danger of evanescence or breakdown, is a notion that was espoused by the story's character which, as the critics noticed, was in the field of action, namely in politics. This explanation, or opinion or standpoint taken towards the government and the governed, was also evident in *Yawmiyat Na'ib fi al-Aryaf*. This work does not simply convey the life of the Egyptian peasant. As mentioned in the British magazine *The Spectator*:

In this book, about social corruption, there is more than denunciation. And similar to what happened to Russian authors in the 19th century²⁰ and with the author, Dickens, an Egyptian writer feels that mere sympathy or compassion is simply not enough.

From the comments that I have referred to, you can find an answer to your question and know my standpoint from my books as you requested. And here I will also mention a comment from a critic concerning one of my intellectual plays that reveals the human being's impotence in front of his destiny. The critic saw that the human being's situation in life has already been skilfully highlighted by Sophocles in *King Oedipus*, and furthermore Shakespeare has also skilfully presented this in *Romeo and Juliet* in a perfect form. The Gods willed to destroy King Oedipus, and fate directly intervened in the form of continuous coincidences to separate Romeo and Juliet. The critic said that in my work, however, there was no direct intervention either in the form of divine will or as accidental chances, but rather hidden forces in a natural course of motion which limit the human will. The law of time, for instance, in *Ahl al-Kahf*, functions naturally without changing its course or returning 300 years to reunite the characters, Mishlinya and Prisca. The power that separated Mishlinya and Prisca is not the divine power that separated Romeo and Juliet and caused coincidence to play its part, firstly by Romeo killing Juliet's cousin and then by the plague's outbreak that stopped the messenger from delivering the message to Romeo, which of course led at the end to a tragedy. The tragedy that is in *Ahl al-Kahf* is due to a natural force, namely time or the new society. Prisca realises that it is impossible for society to accept the idea of her reuniting with a man who lived 300 years ago. This power of society is also evident in my play *al-Malik Udib*, as when Udib was informed that he was married to his mother, he could not imagine it, because he has seen her simply as a woman in her full maturity. Like Mishlinya, Oedipus wanted to persevere, survive the challenge and preserve his family, but Jocasta, like Prisca, was not able to bear this idea. The laws of society embedded in the depth of her heart judged that she should fade away, so she

²⁰ It is questionable here who the author is referring to specifically.

hanged herself.

Human will to me, therefore, is free, yet within specific limitations. These limitations are laws and standards, but not tyrant wills or accidental chances. The human, to me, is indeed impotent in front of his destiny, which he must overcome. If someone watches these plays closely, he or she will find this is what Mishlinya is trying to do, and striving to convince Prisca to ignore the consequences of time. We find that, firstly, Shahrayār challenged all the laws by his attempt to destroy humanity. Sulayman challenged the law of love by entering the heart of Belkis, Queen of Sheba. Udib challenged society by continuing to be a husband to his mother and finally, Pygmalion challenged the Gods by destroying the statue that the Gods breathed spirit into and he considered as ruined artwork. None of these persons has surrendered to his destiny without a challenge and a struggle. They have been forced to give up in the end because the dominating powers are not man-made. Struggle always remain, even if against the impossible, it is the duty of mankind.

Explanation in literature or art is, thus, the focus of responsibility, because it is the opinion and the standpoint, and as long as there is an opinion, there is a commitment towards it and responsibility for it. As for expression, it is free, like life itself, only if it does not limit itself by exaggeration in form, which transforms it to art for art's sake; or if it does not trap itself in a specific content to become committed art. Here, you may think of the question: What is the difference between commitment in expression and commitment in explanation since each of them leads to committed art? My answer is: commitment in expression may not reflect a specific opinion. The standpoint here is simply linked to a specific topic, as if the author or artist presents a certain social class that he does not divert from. You do not get from this image or creation in this specific environment any personal direction or personal opinion, or namely an explanation in itself. Commitment in explanation is not limited by the topic, but limited by opinion. The writer or artist here deals with different topics and presents different social classes, but you reach at the end of his work a specific explanation, opinion, standpoint or direction. And as I said: as long as there is opinion, there is always responsibility. But responsibility, as we know, only stems from freedom, because the restricted person has no responsibility. How can we then reconcile commitment, responsibility and freedom? You cannot be successful unless the opinion is truly yours and the commitment stems from you, as I mentioned previously. The opinion and commitment must both be from the depth of your freedom. Your responsibility for them both is your responsibility for your freedom. But who would you be accountable to? You are accountable to yourself; the self that freedom stems from. This is what I see as the essence of a free thinker's being, the opinion is his and the responsibility is his. If

the opinion stems from the authority of action; the authority of governance, and the responsibility also belongs to this authority, what would one say? There is nothing to say other than the fact that the thinker or intellectual, along with his responsibility, have been replaced by the authority of action to take solely the burden and consequences. As I have said before, the crisis of the world today is due to the authority of action forcefully taking the full responsibility of managing the helm of this life and guiding the destiny of human beings. There is no one today who can claim that free thought is what directs our present world. The atomic scientists who refused to submit to the orders of the ruling authorities were oppressed simply because they were trying to save humanity and follow their responsibility towards themselves and their conscience. As for the rest of the scientists and intellectuals, they conformed, cooperated and conceded. In every country on earth, we would find the authority of action understanding and uniting on one thing: submitting thought to its service. This unity and understanding from the side of actions is met by difference and division from the side of thought.

What if thought were able, in all the nations of the world to unite, agree, bind its authority, express its views freely on the situation of mankind, and take responsibility? What if it rejected, at the same time, in every part of the world, co-operation with the authorities of action on what it believed to be harmful to the interests of human beings and humanity? What if thought stood in this entire world with this united standpoint? I will leave the evaluation to you. I have, therefore, insisted on protecting the authority of thought and its freedom and independence in relation to the authority of action. I have always applied this principle to myself strictly, for I have stayed away from the practical political arena and refused to join any political party. I have considered the intellectual to be a monk; his practice is his freedom. I have spoken of an ivory tower and resorting to it, but I did not of course mean isolation from life and a separation from society, as many may have mistakenly supposed. I meant isolating the intellectual from political parties so that he is not used as a tool in the hands of its men and he loses the ability to see things freely. Thus, I strongly insisted on the idea of isolating the intellectual from political parties, regardless of the many times that circumstances were favourable for me to engage myself in a political party and reach through it the authority of action. The idea that dominated my mind and still does is this: that the true responsibility of the free intellectual is towards himself alone. It is neither towards one of the political parties nor towards one of the governors. The intellectual who deserts his place to submit to the authority of action, represented in political parties or government, is an intellectual who is escaping from delivering his message. And such an escape to the political arena and governance

is what stripped thought from its authority and made it a follower not a leader.

It has never crossed my mind to isolate thought from any political or social activity. The isolation that I have called for is the isolation from politicians and not politics, from parties and not society. Thought in its different forms (literature, stories, art, etc.) must, in my view, concern itself with everything that happens in its society and era, from politics to social issues. Hence, as long as thought concerns itself with humanity, and as long as humanity is linked to politics and society, intellectuals, writers or artists must also live in their age and society fully, with an interest in politics and social affairs, because that's what humanity is. In my books *Tahta Shams al-Fikr*, *Shajarat al-Hukm*, *Ta'ammulat fi al-Siyasah* and *Praksa*,²¹ etc., there is an adequate summary of my standpoint on politics and society. One critic said that my standpoint did not take a practical position. This is true because this in itself is my doctrine. My doctrine rejects strongly that thought should change its character, and become an action. I have never lost hope in the power of thought as I consider it an independent power with its own components and individual character. When I lose this hope, I will seek right away the simple aid of action. And only then will I take the path of literary and artistic doctrines that submitted to action or merged with it to an extent that it became difficult for them to be rid of this reputation and of the subjugation that they had, rightly or wrongly, undergone. You may ask me; to what extent can independent thought affect action? I have no doubt that independent thought affects action to a great extent, much more than the effect of integrated thought or thought that is subject to action. Integrated thought, or thought subject to action, joins a party or becomes a follower of political governance; this way, it loses its credibility and grandeur, not in the eyes of other parties, but at times in the eyes of its own party. It is, consequently, not allowed to instruct or inspire but receives instructions from the leaders who dictate how these should be followed. You may then ask me: Did my independent standpoint have an impact on action?

The truth is that I cannot give a definite answer myself; it is difficult for me to know the effect of my works on others in general. And I do not think that a book like *Yawmiyat Na'ib fi al-Aryaf* has had a direct influence in solving what it highlighted in terms of flaws in the government, the judiciary and management in the countryside, in spite of my knowledge that many influential figures have read it. My opinion always is that men of intellect, literature and art are not required to directly reform. Their true role is to prepare the men of action, the nation and government to implement reforms. I have written before in one of my books that: "the

²¹ From the original Greek *Praxagora*.

author or the artist is not a reformer, but a reformer of the reformer.” Nevertheless, I can say that I have once seen a direct effect of my book on one of society’s issues. One day, I wrote a suggestion to form a ministry for social affairs, and at the same time I also suggested names of ministers, among them excellent employees. Not much after two months later, a man was elected to government and implemented my suggestions and formed a ministry, calling it “The Ministry of Social Affairs”. He chose the exact employees and ministers that I suggested. How did this happen? There is no doubt that the independence of my thought made this possible, for if I had been a writer for a political party, I would not have come across such knowledge, or caused those employees and ministers to be appointed and my suggestions would have been a topic for mockery, criticism and snobbery. Independent, free thought can always be a vital authority equally counterbalanced alongside the authority of action. In this case, thought becomes a progressive, driving force in relation to work. This is my doctrine.

I have told you that expression is the talent of creation and creativity, and explanation is what sheds light on the human condition. To clarify further this definition: If you are expressing life without explanation, then you are a writer or an artist. And if you have an explanation for life, but do not have the talent of expressing it, then you are anything but a writer or artist. If you are able to express and explain life, then you are a writer or an artist with an opinion, standpoint and orientation, and hence you are able to influence somehow human development and guidance. There are, however, cases where expression alone, if it reaches its height, is able to lead indirectly to progress. But there are also, as I mentioned before, cases where explanation can ruin the beauty of expression if it goes beyond the limits of artistic coordination, which consequently leads to both effects becoming invalidated. As a result, the literary or artistic effect would seem artificial, losing the very reason for its existence, its sincerity. What is meant here by sincerity is sincerity in art, meaning the feeling that comes from deep within us showing that the artistic or literary effect has been naturally delivered. This could not happen unless the literary or artistic effect is delivered naturally in a coherent and perfectly proportioned way. If one overrides the other, it results in distortions and deformations, even if the outcome may look good.

In the light of all this, there is a necessary condition for the existence of both expression and explanation, which is to find proportionality and consistency between them, or namely the equilibrium. I also told you that the authority of thought must remain in counterbalance with the authority of action, so what is meant here by thought? Is it the mind alone? This is a point that needs clarification as well. Thought that is equal and in counterbalance with action includes, in my perspective, both mental power and spiritual power, especially within the scope

of literature and art. This is an issue on which various contemporary literary and artistic doctrines differ. Most of these doctrines neglect the spiritual or religious notions, and all that remains then is the mental powers from which these doctrines derive all their activities. This, for instance, applies to Sartre's existentialism, socialist realism and other doctrines that have been linked to materialism because they limit the power of thought by focusing solely on the logic of the mind. When it comes to the doctrine of equilibrium, one can call two forces "thought": the force of the mind and the force of the heart, i.e. logic and faith. These two are sources of human knowledge. An animal, however, cannot comprehend, believe or possess any other source of knowledge than its instinct. It does not have faith because it does not comprehend the notion of a superior being, as I mentioned earlier. The human being is the only creature that realises and is aware of the superior being. There are two ways in which a human being attempts to comprehend this notion: first, by logic with the mind and, secondly, faith from the heart. The first relies on hard evidence and the other relies on hidden feelings. Since these two methods have always been readily available for human beings, they must be nourished and developed to a great extent, each in its own way. I have previously mentioned that mixing them together is futile, just like submitting one of them to the other is also futile. The mind must always doubt and ask for evidence, whilst the heart must always believe without proof. Each of them must be seen in its own way and in different circumstances. To get rid of one of them for the sake of the other is a disruption of one of humanity's features, in the same way as one intervening to limit the other's freedom leads to halting the course of humanity's development.

Equilibrium points towards a balance between the mind and the heart, like two planets revolving one around the other, and moving forward in the same direction. I have previously shown in my book *Tahta Shams al-Fikr* in a chapter entitled "An Area of Faith" how the mind and faith are able to live side by side in a human being without one engulfing the other or affecting its target or way. With mind, logic, heart and faith, the human being can live a full life. And perhaps the crisis of modern civilization, as I mentioned before, is what hinders the human being from living such a full life; regardless of how much the human mind excels, there is a feeling of shortage. This shortage brings to the human being a feeling of anxiety, or at least some anxiety, which has become a common feature in the age we live in.

Now, I shall summarise the doctrine of equilibrium for you through these five principles: First, you are an equilibrist if you believed that existence is the counterbalance with the other. Earth would not exist without a counterbalance with the sun. There is *no* single creature. And every creature, character, condition and position would exist neither in the

sensual world nor in the world of meanings without its “other”. There has to be an “other” for you to “be”. Equilibrium, then, is founded on “otherness”, and an “equilibrist existence” can be summarised as follows: “Without the “other” there is no existence.” Second, you are an equilibrist if you believe that thought must be in counterbalance with action, and that the responsibility of thought lies in its freedom and independence from action; this is opposed to the views of other doctrines that believe in the merging of thought within action, or its submission to it. The doctrine of equilibrium is in agreement with existentialism, realism, socialism and many other doctrines that focus on the responsibility of thought for guidance and development. It differs from them, however, in that it calls for the independence of thought from action and does not allow the intellectual to engage with action, unlike Sartre’s existentialism, where he, amongst others, worked to create a political party and supported at one time the right party and another, the left party. Hence, equilibrium does not allow the intellectual to submit thought to action, like countries that have strict systems and do not allow for thought to express an opinion or a standpoint that conflicts with what is believed to be the agreed creed.

You are then an equilibrist if you see it as your responsibility to make of thought a free power with its own independent tools and special style, to counterbalance the power of action, which also has its own tools and style. Third, you are an equilibrist if you believe that good and evil are two modes of human being. Good must equalise and counterbalance evil. One must not penalise an evil doer by cropping his personal freedom because the counterbalance is not between evil and freedom; there is no link between them but the counterbalance should be between good and evil. Reward, thus, is an act of goodness which counterbalances and equalises an evil act. Furthermore, weakness and cases of shortage have as well opposite forces that compensate and counterbalance them out. It is accordingly the human being’s duty to find and extract such counterbalancing forces from *within* himself. Fourth, you are an equilibrist if you believe that the mind, with its logic and doubts, must equalise and counterbalance the heart with its feelings and faith; meaning that doubt can exist both separately and in parallel with faith. And fifth, you are an equilibrist if you see that literary or artistic effect must be based on a counterbalance and equivalence between the force of expression and the force of explanation.

You may ask me: What is the future of the idea of thought that is in counterbalance with action? I would answer you optimistically and say: I see the whole future belonging to such a notion because it is the natural course of things, even if in this present age we still find thought following action, that is to say, the dominance of action. This will not be the case in the future, as I predict that thought in the coming ages will have a great power that springs from itself,

like energy from sunlight. This great power would change the destiny of humans towards supreme goals that are formed by thought outside the purposes of authorities. Thought, then, acquires enough power and inspiration to bring the authority of action back to the right course if it diverts from it or becomes corrupt without thought losing its specific characteristics and turning into action, or taking on the style of politicians so it becomes a debate. You may also ask: what is the future of the doctrine of equilibrium as regards treatment of human beings? I would again tell you optimistically: Equilibrium is a doctrine that resists weakness, shortage and ugliness, first, with faith in the existence of a compensating and counterbalancing power. Secondly, it declares a clear course of resistance to all of those weaknesses that is human advancement (whether individual or social). This human advancement shows the parallel power of counterbalance and compensation, highlighting it and developing it.

This doctrine cancels the effect of weakness and shortage by extracting the forces that compensate and counterbalance. Every nation, society, man, woman, artist, employee or writer and so on, must ask this question if he or she feels a natural shortage or weakness: If I am weak or impotent in a specific area, then I must be strong or able in another, but what is this area? There is never a weak human being, but there is a human being who is unaware of where his compensating power lies. Rise and resist, search and strive to find the compensating power, to reveal it and develop it so that it counterbalances the weaknesses and shortages in you. The day when all humanity rises to find these compensating forces, how many sources of power will erupt to compensate for all the miseries of humanity's incompetence? Therefore, I think I have presented to you my standpoint and its main principles; if you want details then you will have to extract them yourself. It will be easy for you if you re-read my works in this light. I do not mean of course for you to read everything I have written, as there is no writer who can commit himself to a specific notion in all his work unless he is mad.

Madness is sometimes holding onto a single idea. I mean, by re-reading my works, re-reading the works that carry the writer's message. They are the works that must be read thoroughly, which is something that not every reader can do. Hence, reading can sometimes be considered an art in itself, and even a positive act equivalent to writing. The avid reader, the discoverer, creates something that is initially present, but overlooked. What is the value of something that is present if it is unknown? The role of the reader who unravels meanings and directions is similar to that of an explorer of islands and continents. These meanings and directions were present before the journey of discovery, but the explorer or reader is the one who extracts them from void-like fog to light revealed to people. Hence, the blessing and curse of books is reading them. Some readers are similar to an ignorant sailor who has no compass

and does not know north from south. What the sailor is only good at is spreading his sail and blasting off at sea without direction, for if he is lost he will not blame his ignorance, but the sea, for its shortage of islands and beaches. If the sailor does not lose his way, he will wander around briefly and say that he has taken a leisurely tour but that he did not find anything of interest. There are some readers, however, who are more puzzling than that. Those are readers who read books, not to extract the author's opinion, but rather to apply their own view and beliefs from doctrines and literary or artistic thought. These readers read books to check if the author has a similar opinion or not, for these readers are not interested in knowing anything about the author. Here, readers demand something from the author: namely that the author has written the book according to what they, readers, want which could be issues that an author would not have thought of. This kind of reader is unlike the explorer because, like the sailor, he goes out to sea, not to discover islands, but to declare after a swift tour that: the sea should have revealed a nearby island that is fit for cultivation that has mines of steel and oil wells. All these different types of navigators are unable to discover anything because they do not know anything or want or try to and hence they go out to sea and return without saying anything fruitful and beneficial about what they saw. That does not include a specific kind of readers who attempt to falsify an author's thought and if unsuccessful, they turn to the truths behind the work and tamper with it so that it appears shallow. That of course is the reader's fault and not the author's. The best of all is the humble reader who attempts with all honesty and kind will to follow the author's thought with patience and care, which is enough whether the reader has succeeded or not in understanding what the author intends. This kind of reader does not often pretend or boast knowledge or speak without consideration. We can all recognize this reader from his or her choice of words and balance of judgment.

In short, the discoverer reader is not an ordinary one, but a rare reader, because he or she has been gifted with patience, accuracy, experience, good reception, lack of pretence and love for the author. I say love for the author, because a reader will not exert any effort to discover something that he or she does not like. Hence, there are many characteristics that qualify this reader to make discoveries: to give more than he or she would take from the author. Whoever discovers an island, no matter how small it is, would give it a value in time, place and history more than what he or she would take from it. This reader is the one who creates the author. Yes, he is the one who created Aristotle, Abou al-'alaa, al-Khayyam and Shakespeare. This creative reader who reads and then writes his thoughts and notes his discoveries is often called a "critic" or an "explanatory critic". He is the "Christopher Columbus" of art and literature. Without him, generations would not have known the landmarks and pathways of the

human mind's creation. The explanatory reader is this kind as well. Now, you, mysterious reader, were led to discover my truth through the answers I have given you. I hope that you will find in them something of value. You have not mentioned once your name and no one seems to know you. Yet you may be the only person responsible for introducing me to the public; for this I thank you and give you my regards.

What is Equilibrium?²²

It is not here to be taken as “equivalence” in its linguistic sense, which means “equality”. Neither should it be understood as moderation or mediation in things. The meaning of equilibrium here is opposition. And the power of “equilibrium” means the power of “the resisting opposition”. If the meaning of the word has not been understood accordingly, equilibrium would lose its true meaning and goal. Equilibrium in this book is the opposing and resisting motion to another motion.

True One=Zero

Positive life begins with the number “two”, because relationship only takes place when two things exist: namely, movement and life. Every motion must be met by opposition, equalised and a resisting motion. Every force has its opposing balancing force. God alone is the almighty and omnipotent one, and yet He created of his own accord another opposing force: that is the power of Satan, in order for human life to begin, and take shape, form and motion. God created Adam alone, but his presence was neutral. So God created two, Adam and Eve; only then did existence start its natural positive movement. The power of the sun alone is a negative force, but when it divided into other planets, they counterbalanced and equalised each other in a resisting movement in order to survive. Hence, a positive motion started in the universe. The power of absolute authority is a negative movement and there must be an opposing and counterbalancing power to it: the power of the governed, in order for a positive life to begin in society, etc. This is equilibrium in its essence.

To sum up, the one alone has a negative presence; it is one step from nothingness. It is, in terms of positive movement, null. Because it neither resists another, nor is there another force that resists it. With lack of resistance, motion ceases. True life, therefore, only begins after “two”. And for “two” to continue existing, everyone must protect his or her special power. If one overlooks the other or one power engulfs the other, “two” becomes a single “one”:

²² This is al-Hakim's own summary of his book.

meaning a return to negative presence. Equilibrium, therefore, explains the positive life as a necessity for opposite resisting forces to exist alongside one another in the universe and in society. And nothingness, thus, begins with the engulfment of all the forces into singularity. Singularity is tranquillity.

All opposing forces are balancing and resisting motions; they are life itself; and that is equilibrium. Equilibrium is the philosophy of balancing and opposing motion, namely life. Keep your special *independent* power free so that it counterbalances and equates other forces that attempt to engulf you. This way you *resist*, progress, and live. Equilibrium is *resisting* engulfment. If you have a shortage or a weakness, search well within yourself and you will find a hidden *counterbalancing* force and a hidden opposing force. Equilibrate your existence like the earth did towards the sun. Weigh yourself towards the opposing forces lest they engulf and reduce you to nothingness. This is what equilibrium says. Every power that inflates wants to engulf another. In the social and political field, for example, capitalism wanted to engulf work and colonialism wanted to engulf nations. The stronger class wanted to engulf the whole nation, and the West wanted to engulf the East, and so on. Equilibrium is the philosophy of the opposing force and the motion resisting engulfment.

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND AND INFLUENCES

“The notion that the East was, and still is, spiritual only and the West was, and still is, materialistic only is one that overlooks the truth.”²³

I.

One can come up with different answers to the question of who Tawfiq al-Hakim is and who influenced him and his writings at various stages in his life. Some consider him to be a playwright or a novelist whilst others say he is a mere story-teller.²⁴ For me, he is a skilled writer of drama and, more importantly, a philosopher. Al-Hakim's name is primarily known today across the Arab world as a pioneer dramatist although not many of his works are available in print or widely translated into foreign languages. He is one of many misunderstood figures in Egyptian history. He was called a heretic, and many of his controversial works were banned or destroyed. His text *Equilibrium* (1955) is by far (in comparison with his other writings) the most philosophically revolutionary for its time and culture. His experimentation with philosophical existential themes in a literary framework bridges the gap not only between Eastern and Western traditions, but also between literature and philosophy. The intriguing doctrine of equilibrium offers us, the readers, a distinct and particular approach which promises to help us cope better with what he referred to as “moshkilat al-‘asr al hadith” (the crisis of modernity) which we face in modern societies. The crisis is described as an imbalance between the power of thought (the mind) and the power of faith (the heart).²⁵ His view is that, in the modern age, the advancements in science and technology were not met with the same level of progress in the area of faith. And for this reason, there has been an increasing feeling of anxiety over the years. Before exploring further the reasons behind al-Hakim's belief, I would like, in this chapter, to advance an overview of how European existentialism reached parts of the Middle East and, more

²³ This is a quote from an interview given by al-Hakim in 1965 on the post-colonial period. Note that in 1975, he was awarded an honorary doctorate by the Egyptian academy of fine arts about which he commented very little and considered to be of little value to him. This view was expressed by al-Hakim in a phone-call conversation (published by al-Ahram newspaper's archive) between himself and actor Yusuf Wahby who also received the honorary doctorate. During this phone-call, Wahby joked about the doctorate they were to receive and wished to discuss with al-Hakim who would be giving the speech on this occasion. It is noted that, typical of al-Hakim, he declined to be the one to make the speech and asked Wahby to do so instead.

²⁴ See appendix 2 for a survey of his readership and findings.

²⁵ See *Equilibrium* (p.18) where al-Hakim states that there was indeed balance until the beginning of the 19th century and now it has been disrupted by the dominance of the mind.

importantly, how it reached al-Hakim in Egypt and influenced his thought.²⁶ In doing so, I hope to also show the interconnection of cultures (the East and the West) and support al-Hakim's aim of calling for a conception of "borderless thought".²⁷

It is true, according to Di-Capua that existentialism is commonly thought of as a chapter in European intellectual history. Some of the terrible events that took place in this period, to mention only a few, were the slaughter at Verdun and on the Somme, the Bolshevik terror in Russia, the unrest and terror in Italy and Germany, the Depression of 1929-1935, the Spanish Civil War, the Nazi concentration camps and the nuclear destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In brief, to an outsider, western civilization exhibited a decline of values in everything that seemed to matter. Nietzsche had formed an image for modern man that was considered by many thinkers to be not far from the truth. Shortly after Nietzsche, there was an exciting burst of creative energy from literary figures, artists and philosophers, who were in search of lost values and who worked with an increased awareness that "God was dead". Although the founding of European existentialism is attributed to Heidegger (1899-1976) and Jaspers (1883-1969), it did not become globally known until after WWII, when it was popularised by Jean-Paul Sartre and others. At that point, existentialism quickly began to have an impact on the rest of the world. In Egypt, Abd Al-Rahman Badawi,²⁸ an Egyptian postgraduate student of philosophy, was the first to announce in the early 50s that he had devised a new philosophy, which he referred to as "Arab existentialism" (al-Wujudiya).²⁹

Badawi presented this new philosophy as a "series of formulations and adaptations that collectively sought to create a new postcolonial Arab subject: confident, politically involved, independent, self-sufficient and above all, liberated."³⁰ To many Arab intellectuals, Arab existentialism was the new tradition: "European in origin and Middle Eastern by design"³¹. Di-Capua adds that, for many Arab intellectuals, it was considered in the early 1960s to be an

²⁶ I have been inspired in this chapter by the information that I found in an article by Di-Capua, Yoav. "Arab Existentialism: An Invisible Chapter in the Intellectual History of Decolonization". *American Historical Review*. Vol. 17, No 4 (October 27, 2012) pp. 1061- 1091. <http://ahr.oxfordjournals.org/> [accessed 20/04/2014]

²⁷ This is a term I will be using often to describe al-Hakim's own claim that there is no divide (intellectually that is) between the East and the West.

²⁸ Born 1917- Died 2002. See <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2002/601/cu5.htm> (accessed 08/07/2014) *Sirat Hiyati* (*The Story of my Life*), two volumes, 'Abdal-Rahman Badawi, Beirut: al-Mawsu'a al-Arabiya lil-Dirasat wal-Nashr (Arab Foundation for Studies and Publication), 2000. pp382 (vol.1), pp383 (vol.2)

²⁹ His defence of his Ph.D. dissertation on "existential time" took six hours on May 1944. The doyen of modern Arab letters, Taha Husayn, declared it the birth of modern Arab philosophy. The event was covered by al-Ahram newspaper as a national event.

³⁰ Di-Capua, Yoav. "Arab Existentialism: An Invisible Chapter in the Intellectual History of Decolonization". October 27, 2012 <http://ahr.oxfordjournals.org/> [accessed 20/04/2014] p.1061

³¹ Ibid

influential intellectual movement with meaningful global connections tying Arab culture to a culture of resistance. Badawi, during this period, actively translated the works of European thinkers into Arabic and published them amongst many of his own works. One of his most influential works was *Nietzsche: Kholasat al-Fikr al 'urubi*, published in 1975.³² In this post-war climate, in Egypt, what appealed to Arab writers, as Di-Capua says, was how existentialism became “instrumental in furthering the process of decolonization”. It became “a local existentialist tradition that transcended the narrow purview of anti-colonial nationalism, with a focus on physical liberation from foreign rule”³³ and fostering a sense of collectivity. This impacted to a great extent on the writings of many authors who found comfort in the culture of resistance which flourished with the rise of existentialism during such a harsh period.³⁴ Di-Capua has noted the lack of scholarship on Third world intellectuals and those of their ideas that informed decolonization. He claims that there is very little done to present a comprehensive account of intellectuals of this rich period. He quotes (in his footnote):

It would be useful if post-colonial scholarship made more effort to situate these writers within the class structure of their home societies and the cultural context of a transnational intelligentsia so as to avoid simplistic generalizations that their work embodies some nationalist or ‘Third world’ essence.³⁵

I have also found very little on the matter. Perhaps if one looks at some of the works of Arab existentialists regardless of the works’ genres and the philosophical narratives and drama of al-Hakim, one may be able to situate this intellectual generation within the global historical context of its time. The writings of authors of this period gradually began to convey variants of existentialism, in a way that showed their efforts to overcome decolonization and the accompanying challenges posed by social injustice, instability, contradictions of ideologies and the search or struggle for liberation.³⁶ When Badawi introduced existentialism to the Arab

³² *Nietzsche: a Summary of European Thought*. This edition included sections on Schopenhauer, Plato, Aristotle, Greek thought, Medieval philosophy and German Idealism with a focus on Fichte, Hegel and Shelling. 5th edition. Print house Publication, 72 Road Fahd al- Salem, Kuwait. Available as an electronic copy in Arabic on: http://monoskop.org/images/b/b6/Badawi_Abdel_Rahman_Nietzsche.pdf (accessed 07/07/2014) See image and list of works in appendix 1.

³³ Di-Capua, Yoav. p.1064 Note that Badawi argued that “if a civilisation denied individual identity before a higher deity, it would be nearly impossible to produce philosophy to comprehend the spirit of the latter.” See online source: <http://gulfnews.com/egypt-s-pioneer-intellectual-1.550510>

³⁴ Ibid. And in France, de Beauvoir wrote “not a week passed without the newspapers discussing us; existentialism became ‘the first media crazy of the post-war era’”. See de Beauvoir, “Force of Circumstance” quoted in R. Aronson, *Camus and Sartre*. University of Chicago Press, 2004. p. 48

³⁵ Kennedy, Dane. “Imperial history and post-colonial theory” in James D. Le Sueur, ed., *The Decolonization Reader* (New York, 2003) pp. 1-22. In Di-Capua, Yoav’s article; footnote no.8

³⁶ Di-Capua, Yoav., p. 1062

world,³⁷ he did not know that it would become such an important phenomenon, or that it would serve a dual role. On the one hand, as an influential movement, Arab existentialism paved the way for Arab intellectuals or ‘Third World Arab intelligentsia’ to emerge and enjoy a free platform where they could exchange their ideas. And on the other hand, the movement “framed decolonization as a process with an extremely broad cultural and intellectual spectrum, ranging from the ontology of modern Arab subjectivity and the balance between local and universal culture (e.g. the problem of authenticity) to the nexus between politics and culture and the desired contract between state and society.”³⁸ Could this movement have had such an influence on al-Hakim that he saw it, perhaps along with many other writers, as an opportunity to *reinvent a new Arab self* within a philosophical framework? This is very plausible.

Although European existentialism attracted its fair share of criticisms around the same time as Arab existentialism underwent scrutiny, it continued to exist and be influential. Unfortunately, it was not a unified phenomenon, but rather a “multifocal intellectual system” which seemed to be both contradictory and complex. Nevertheless, Badawi’s proposition (mainly to fuse European existentialism with Islamic philosophy in order to liberate the Arab self from the constraints of colonial culture and religious restraints) was, at the time, very much welcomed by intellectuals, scholars and writers who focused on Arab existentialism in its new form.³⁹ The existentialist doctrine continued to become dominant, and intellectuals of this period like Mahmud Amin al ‘alim attempted to introduce existentialist ideas into politics.⁴⁰ I shall not, however, be concerned here to discuss the case of Arab political existentialism.⁴¹ Rather, in what follows I shall try to defend the impact that European existentialism had on the formation of Arab existentialism and highlight some of its developments. Before I do so, I believe I ought to briefly put forward ‘Abd al-Rahman Badawi’s philosophy and stress the role

³⁷ From the early 40s, there were two further prominent teachers besides Badawi. Those were Lewis ‘Awad (Psychology) and Yousef Murad. Badawi was teaching those who soon became prominent names in the Egyptian literary arena, such as Muhammad Amin el ‘alim, Badr al-Din, Fathi Ghunaim and writer Annis Mansour.

³⁸ Di-Capua, Yoav., p. 1064.

³⁹ Ibid. Di-Capua writes that existentialism was gradually seen as “a salient characteristic of transnational thought”. Also see Badawi, *Sirat Hayati*, 1:62. (Note that the text is partly translated from Arabic to French by Badawi himself during 1967).

⁴⁰ It is important to note that Al ‘alim began to marginalise the old-guard intelligentsia, which was a trend that began to emerge in the late 60s and became problematic for many writers like al-Hakim and Taha Hussein. (This affected authors’ reputations and readership). Al ‘alim, who was one of Badawi’s students in the early 40s, was influenced by some of Badawi’s ideas.

⁴¹ I will address this further in chapter three, p. 140 addressing the concept of political “commitment” and the role of the intellectual from the point of view of both, al-Hakim and Sartre.

that his publications played in narrowing the gap between European existentialism and Eastern Islamic thought.

Badawi was not only a keen student of philosophy who was taught by the most prominent professors of his time, but also he was a linguist, a skilful translator and an avid reader. According to an article on Badawi in the *al-Ahram* national newspaper, “he is the first Arab existentialist, emerging in Egypt in the 1940s contemporaneously with, or at least immediately after, the rise of existentialism in France and Germany.”⁴² Hanafi claims in his article that Badawi's “central line of argument is that in assimilating the achievements of Greek philosophy, the Arabs concentrated on form, and in so doing undermined or denied the spirit. Collective generalities were favoured over individual truths, and it is this that makes it necessary for any present-day, comprehensive philosophical system to bring that vital dimension back into the ongoing process of exchange.”⁴³ Due to Badawi's determination, strong character and Eastern and Western influences, he situated himself amongst the most important intellectuals of this period. In the *Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*,⁴⁴ he explicitly described himself as an existentialist philosopher and confessed to having made much use of the philosophies of Heidegger, Bergson and many others. He, an individualist and an idealist in the tradition of German idealism, to which he devoted a significant portion of his work, spent the major part of his academic career translating the works of Heine, Eichendorff, Goethe, Bern, Brecht and Schweitzer, and writing on Kant, Schelling, Hegel, Schopenhauer, and Spengler.⁴⁵ These works were in addition to Badawi's own works titled *Humanism and Existentialism in Islamic thought, Aristotle's Logic, Sophism, and Ibn Miskawayah*.⁴⁶ *The eternal wisdom*. Badawi influenced Arab existentialists and Egyptian authors so much so that

⁴² Hanafi, Hassan. “A Philosopher in Extensio” *al-Ahram* Newspaper, Cairo, 29 August- 4th Sept 2002, Issue No. 601. <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2002/601/cu5.htm> (accessed 02/04/2014) Note that Badawi began travelling on a regular basis to Paris from 1945 to work on his translation and be familiar with the current intellectual and philosophical debates.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ The *Encyclopaedia* is available in two parts. It was first published on the 1st of January 1966 by al-mo'asassa al-arabiya lil-dirasat wal nashr. Available in Arabic online: www.alexandria.ahlamontada.com.

⁴⁵ See appendix 1 for an excerpt on Badawi and his work based on information found in *al-Ahram* Weekly online (Issue No. 601) Badawi produced 33 editions, six translations, six versions of other authors' books and four original compositions -- not to mention five books in French, resulting in a grand total of 54 works revolving around Muslim and Arab heritage in relation to the West and Western influences. He also translated in 1984 the play *Faust* to Arabic. See Arabic source http://www.maaber.org/issue_january09/books_and_readings3.htm (accessed 15/07/2014).

⁴⁶ Ibn Miskawayah is a tenth century Islamic historian and philosopher (d. 1030 CE) who expanded on al-Kindi's concept of moderation and wrote in *Tahdib al-Akhlaq wa Tathir al-'Araq* that the relationship between virtues and vices is one of alternation (similar to the view held by Heraclitus). See Ibn Muskawayh's *Tahdib al-Akhlaq wa Tathir al-'Araq* (translated as *Refinement of morals*), Cairo, Egyptian press, 1977, pp. 22-23. www.muslimphilosophy.com/ip/rep/H042.htm (accessed 04/04/2013).

many would claim that he should not only be commended for his efforts as a philosopher, but also as a translator of vital works which encouraged rising authors at the time (i.e. Al 'alim, Husayn and al-Hakim) to see the merits of combining aspects of the Western traditions, Greek heritage and Islamic Civilization. Badawi hoped for others to see these as complementary to one another.

Perhaps what also contributed to sparking a fierce debate and made Badawi's name known internationally is his famous article 'Can there be existential morals?'⁴⁷ This question occupied the minds of Arab thinkers⁴⁸ who began during this period to question the values of some of the Islamic schools of thought. They felt challenged by what Nietzsche and others laid down in their work.⁴⁹ The idea that we are free to create value and meaning for ourselves became a focal point of debate and, gradually but steadily, Arab writers found that they faced a challenge to embrace this freedom and to create meaningful and aspirational values for which they are wholly responsible, rather than lapsing into nihilism and the apathy of mass consensus.⁵⁰ Unlike what Arab writers were accustomed to, or grew up to believe in, the message that was portrayed by existentialism was that morality is neither rooted in any external setting nor in an objective system of values. Nietzsche's *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft (The Gay Science)* presented "moral codes as mere reflections of existing social structures that serve to deaden the impulses of the individual and maintain the interests of the powerful classes".⁵¹ This portrayal of morality has left a lasting effect on many Egyptian writers. It led Badawi to conclude in his famous article that "existential morality, being dependent on suspicion and thereby incapable of lending itself to objective standards, cannot exist."⁵² This has continued to be a topic of much debate and examination by many Arab writers such as novelist Suhayl Idris.⁵³

⁴⁷ The date of publication is unknown and the text might have been destroyed.

⁴⁸ Philosophers, Muhammad 'abid al-Jabiri and Fu'ad Zakariyya discussed the Arab world's decline as due to an inability to historicize the past and a dependence on tradition. Also, Hassan Hanafi touched upon this broadly in his discussion of "theology of liberation" on the issue of decadence.

⁴⁹ Nietzsche's ideas were communicated to Arab authors via Badawi's writings either through re-assessment of Nietzsche's work or offered by Badawi to his readers in the form of a translated text from the original German language into Arabic.

⁵⁰ I believe the latter view referred to is the idea that morality is herd-instinct in the individual, as expressed in *The Gay Science* §116.

⁵¹ Nietzsche, F. *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft (The Gay Science)*. CUP, 2001 (trans. Josefine Nauckhoff).

⁵² Hanafi, Hassan. "A Philosopher in Extensio" al-Ahram Newspaper, Cairo, 29 August- 4th Sept 2002, Issue No. 601. <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2002/601/cu5.htm> (accessed 02/04/2014).

⁵³ Dr. Idris wrote about his experience living in Paris; in his letter to al-Ma'addawi he says: "Life here is characterized by a kind of freedom that has no parallel in the East. We are in need of such freedom. Freedom in our lands is suffocated. In Paris people can say and do whatever they want and live humanism to its fullest extent. Our freedom of speech in the East however, is repressed. The freedom of thought is massacred, and the freedom

In order to sum up this section on Badawi and his philosophy, perhaps one should present the reasons why he is not positively spoken of today in Egypt, and more generally in the Arab world. According to an article by Almubarak published in *The Guardian* in 2002, the question of what has happened to Badawi's publications and ideas is one that lends itself to many interpretations.⁵⁴ Some say that his ideas have lived on and have taken different forms or merged with current ideologies, whilst others disagree and consider him and his work to be a mere chapter of the past.⁵⁵ Although Badawi contributed positively to Arab existentialism and paved the way for many writers who came after him, no one can deny that his reputation has been, like many other writers of his generation, tarnished by the negative stigma attached to their names directly or indirectly. Hanafi notes, "it is remarkable that, for someone of his background, he preferred knowledge to homeland, self to subject, individual to group: remarkable but sad, for by the end of a life devoted to the existential imperative of existence in the world, the world had been reduced to a salutary individual existence."⁵⁶ On the one hand, some believe that Badawi's national renaissance revolved around "the idealist and not the scientific West,"⁵⁷ and the Sufi and not the artistic East"⁵⁸ whilst others believe that the source of his knowledge remained solely in the West and that "he only paid attention politically and practically to the East".⁵⁹ Whatever the case may have been, misconceptions and interpretations concerning Badawi's personal life, as to a great extent for al-Hakim, seem to have over

of life outside the boundaries of inherited tradition is virtually non-existent. We need to learn from the West the love of freedom as it is this love alone that would guarantee us the freedom we yearn for." Al-Ma'addawi replied jokingly: "Are you spending your time in the nests of existentialists, have you see Simone de Beauvoir, have you walked behind the coffin of André Gide?" See Di Capua p. 1073. Also in Muhammad, *Anwar al-Maddawi*, p.190 and Suhayl Idris' *Zhikrayat al-adab wa-l-Hubb (Memories of Literature and Love)* p.103 Dr. Idris wrote a self-described existentialist novel, similar in style to that of Sartre's *Nausea*, titled "al-Hay al-Latini (*The Latin Quarter*)" published 1953 (the same time al-Hakim published *Arini Allah*).

⁵⁴ Almubarak, Khalid. "Abdur Rahman Badawi: Distinguished academic and philosopher known for his work on existentialism", *The Guardian*, Monday 19 August 2002. See:

<http://www.theguardian.com/news/2002/aug/19/guardianobituaries.obituaries> (accessed 17/07/2014) Note that Almubarak wrote Badawi's first name "Abdur" rather than "Abdel" which is a spelling mistake.

⁵⁵ In 2006, Alexandria University announced the revival of three books by Badawi; one is a translation of Euripides' Greek tragedies (18 plays), the second is *Museion (Muses)* on the museum of the library written in French, comparing the library to that of Oxford and Cambridge, and finally, a 1986 work by Badawi where he writes about his vision for the role of the ancient library and its historical importance. (See http://www.bibalex.org/News/NewsDetails_EN.aspx?id=1110&Keywords=&fromDD=1&fromMM=6&fromYY=2006&toDD=30&toMM=6&toYY=2006&PageSize=5&searching=&Dir=4) (Accessed 17/07/2014).

⁵⁶ Hanafi, Hassan. "A Philosopher in Extensio" *al-Ahram Newspaper*, Cairo, 29 August- 4th Sept 2002, Issue No. 601. <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2002/601/cu5.htm> (accessed 02/04/2014).

⁵⁷ Yet he ignored Western rationalism and the Renaissance, omitting such indispensable figures as Descartes and Spinoza, as well as the achievements of Italian, Russian and Anglo-American philosophy, and in discussing the East, he paid no attention to India, China and the ancient civilisations of Africa and the Near East.

⁵⁸ Hanafi, Hassan. "A Philosopher in Extensio" *al-Ahram Newspaper*, Cairo, 29 August- 4th Sept 2002, Issue No. 601. <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2002/601/cu5.htm> (accessed 02/04/2014).

⁵⁹ Ibid

shadowed his scholarly achievements.⁶⁰ Perhaps, this was evident from the responses he received after publishing his autobiography *Sirat Hyati (The Story of my Life)*. Accordingly, he was referred to afterwards as a “staunch misanthrope who hates even his own teachers (including Taha Husayn), and a miser who does not own a car or buy new clothes”, and generally, a not very pleasant or sociable person. Hanafi of *al-Ahram* newspaper justifies in his article on Badawi this image, which is portrayed in the Egyptian (and Middle Eastern) press, by saying that the isolation from others and from society is:

A mere condition of “being a philosopher in *extension*.”⁶¹ [Badawi’s] interests covered a vast intellectual territory; and even if he didn’t always reach the bottom of the subject at hand, his understanding spanned its every dimension. Single-handedly he produced two encyclopaedias: *Encyclopaedia of Orientalists* and *Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (the latter in two parts), in which, though he openly makes use of predominantly foreign references, Badawi acknowledges no sources. He is, in his own view, the singular philosopher, the Hegel of his generation, without predecessors to speak of (except for ‘Abdel-Raziq and, before he disowns him, Husayn). Even in resuming Paul Kraus’ project, *Plato for the Arabs*, he transcends his starting point.⁶²

It is true that Mustafa ‘abdel-raziq,⁶³ whom Badawi admired and spared from his criticism, was the pioneer of Arab philosophers, but had it not been for Badawi’s scholarly efforts,⁶⁴ existentialism would have never found a thriving platform from which it could evolve in different forms in Egypt. In disagreeing with Hanafi, Badawi has not sacrificed philosophy for the history of philosophy. Instead, his contributions are all the more essential for those who held the torch of existential thought after him. In several senses, although Badawi drove himself out of Egypt, in exile,⁶⁵ he was right in always considering himself Plato’s counterpart, at least

⁶⁰ Note that he was head of philosophy at ‘Ain Shams University for two decades (the beginning of his career coincides with the July Revolution) Following Egypt’s defeat in 1967, he resorted to teaching and living in Kuwait.

⁶¹ There is a spelling mistake in the original article as it appears in *al-Ahram* newspaper. I believe the intended word is “extinction”.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ “Raziq’s methodical teaching methods spawned specialists in every philosophical discipline”; his death left a gap which Badawi devoted himself to fill. “Planting the seeds of *reform* and what came to be known as “enlightenment,” abdel-raziq was the most faithful student of Muhammed ‘abduh. ‘Abduh is the progressive Shaykh of al-Azhar Islamic establishment who founded the philosophy department at Fouad I University (Cairo University today). ‘Abduh saw that rationalism and progress did not mean secularism. He’d be better served by a religious renaissance. See Hanafi, Hassan. “A Philosopher in Extensio” *al-Ahram* Newspaper, Cairo, 29 August-4th Sept 2002, Issue No. 601. <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2002/601/cu5.htm> (accessed 02/04/2014). Al-Hakim confessed in an interview for *al-Ahram* that abdel-raziq was the first to believe in him as a writer.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Badawi inverted Goethe’s oriental project attempting a comprehensive Eastern Diwan of the West. Hassan claims that Badawi’s “scholarly project initially branched out to include editing, translation and adaptation as well as authorship; and he pursued all the branches simultaneously till the end of his life.”

⁶⁵ Badawi only returned due to his illness and was eager to be treated in his homeland.

in the sense that he was "the first teacher" of the Arabs, as Plato was of the Greeks. And this is what no one can today deny.

One can now begin to have a better perspective on the intellectual scene of this rich period now that Egypt was thriving culturally and intellectually. As is evident from a front page in *al-Ahram* with the headline "Knowledge for all and Knowledge for society"⁶⁶ (image below), on a speech given by Nasser on the day of celebrating knowledge, it was a priority.⁶⁷ This thriving climate allowed for the awakening of the Egyptian mind.



In an article titled "From Revolutions to constitutions: the case of Egypt",⁶⁸ the author writes that during former President Nasser's regime in 1953,⁶⁹ Badawi was asked to be one of the 1950 Egyptians chosen by the President to take part in an independent Constitution Committee to draft a new constitution for Egypt.⁷⁰ Although I have found no evidence to suggest that al-Hakim was also on this committee, it is plausible that the two thinkers crossed paths in one way or another. This could have perhaps happened during one of Nasser's

⁶⁶ Primary education was free to all. Taha Husayn was the one to call for education to be free as "a basic human right". University education was not free until the early 1960s. Prior to the 1960s, the government sent scholars abroad as part of an exchange of knowledge programme with France. This programme, during King Farouk's reign, helped many young scholars like Muhammed 'Abduh (who influenced Hussein's thought and al-Hakim) to travel to France and return to teach in Egypt's universities.

⁶⁷ Dated 7th of February 1967 (available on microfilm at *al-Ahram* archive).

⁶⁸ F. Long, Jr. Antony. (2013) "From Revolution to Constitution: the case of Egypt", The Royal Institute of International Affairs, Blackwell Publishing. See: http://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/public/International%20Affairs/2013/89_2/89_2Lang.pdf (accessed 08/05/2014).

⁶⁹ It is my belief that until 1952, al-Hakim had used drama, short stories and plays to conceal to a great extent his philosophical views and it was only in 1955 that he began to explicitly publish them in the form of philosophical dialogues (essays), presenting his doctrine of equilibrium.

⁷⁰ The constitution's final draft was rejected by the new regime and entirely abandoned in 1954. The result was a watered-down version in 1956 which allowed for a political order defined by a revolutionary ideology, but with a strong authoritarian Presidential system. At a later stage in his life, Badawi insisted that "President Nasser had aborted Egypt's liberal experiment, which could well have developed into a full democracy." See Badawi, A. *Sirat Hayati (The Story of my Life)* (2000) 2 vols, Beirut. Also see Malik, "The Reception of Kierkegaard in the Arab world", p. 62

intellectual gatherings, or it may simply be that al-Hakim had read some, perhaps all, of Badawi's works.⁷¹ What I can confirm, however, is that both Badawi and al-Hakim shared a passion for all things Parisian⁷² and the belief that the West and Islam (or the East) were complementary.⁷³

In concluding this section, although Egypt at the time was considered to be the heart of the Arab world and the centre of culture, sadly this status did not last. By the mid- 1970s, and throughout the first decade of the twenty-first century (as al-Hakim predicted in his *Equilibrium*), gradually, Egypt began to lose its edge. Those whom the public once considered to be Egypt's great modern writers, such as Tawfiq al-Hakim, Zaki Naguib Mahmoud⁷⁴ and 'Abdel Rahman Badawi, in addition to novelists like Naguib Mahfouz and the late short story writer and playwright Yusuf Idris, were, amongst other intellectuals, attacked by the media.⁷⁵ In fact, censorship has restricted the works of many prominent authors not only in Egypt, but also in many parts of the Middle East, e.g. Syria. The media attacks in Egypt were initiated by Islamic clerics such as Muhammed Metwalli al- Sha'rawi.⁷⁶ Sha'rawi achieved stardom at the age of 59 during the last year of former President Nasser's reign. He did not approve of "intellectuals questioning some of his reactionary fatwas and opinions".⁷⁷ A few of the intellectuals did in fact express their concern about Sha'rawy's thought and even warned President Nasser against placing Shaykh Sha'rawi "above the possibility of making errors."⁷⁸

⁷¹ Badawi's first book was "Nietzsche: a Summary of European Thought" (Cairo, September, 1939). In 1947, Badawi edited Aristotle's books on logic from Arabic manuscripts at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris (completed in 1952). He was fluent in many languages, including French and published 120 works (i.e. *Greek Origins of Political Theories in Islam*, Cairo, 1955) and countless translations of Greek thought (i.e. *Plato*, 1943). He also translated material from German Goethe's Western-Eastern Divan collection into Arabic, an introduction to *Dissidents in Islam* (1946) and the controversial work *A History of Atheism in Islam*. I would not be surprised if al-Hakim had knowledge of these works and translations. Badawi had published 14 short books on philosophy, the most popular one was "Al-insaniyya wa-l- Wujudiyya" (*Humanism and Existentialism in Arab Thought*), published in 1947.

⁷² Note that on 19th February 1967, Badawi considered an invitation to teach temporarily at the Sorbonne in Paris to be his opportunity to "escape the frightful nightmare [he] was living through in Egypt. Thus, [he] intended the trip to be an 'emigration'." al-Hakim, at the time, was 69, a famous writer, columnist at the al-Ahram newspaper and had just had the opportunity to meet with Jean Paul Sartre in the same year in Egypt. As for Badawi, he was living in Paris, and in 1971 the university ('Ain Shams University in Cairo) sacked him for over-staying his leave. See Badawi, A. *Sirat Hiyati (The Story of my Life)*, two volumes, Beirut: al-Muwsu'a al-'arabiya lil-Dirasat wal-Nashr (Arab Foundation for Studies and Publication), 2000. pp382 (Vol.1), pp383 (vol.2).

⁷³ He promoted this thesis in his seminal book *Greek Heritage in Islamic Civilization* (1940) which ran counter to the creeds of modern Islamists. Al-Hakim also was inspired by Greek philosophy and drama which is evident in his plays.

⁷⁴ Note that Mahmoud wrote a significant book called "*The History of Western Philosophies*" in 1954.

⁷⁵ See chapter four (p.157) on criticisms against al-Hakim.

⁷⁶ Sharawi died in 1998 age 87.

⁷⁷ Darwish, Adel. (1999) "Shaykh Mohammed Metwalli Shara'wi: Islamisation by Stealth", World Media, UK <http://www.mideastnews.com/sharawi.htm> [accessed 10/06/2014].

⁷⁸ This is the beginning of a biting attack on intellectuals from religious leaders, and specifically on al-Hakim's *Arini Allah* (1953).

His high status, they believed, was “damaging to the health of the nation’s intellectual being”.⁷⁹ Notwithstanding, Sha’rawi became the first ever Islamic cleric to take part in a religious discussion on national television. The programme, “Nur ‘ala nur” (Light upon light), turned out to be a hit, with an estimated 70 million Arabic-speaking viewers.⁸⁰ Plausibly, this was one of the many critical transitions that left a lasting effect on Egyptian society. Sha’rawi not only affected the views of Egyptians towards cultural, intellectual and religious issues, but he also condemned intellectuals; his activity marked this period (i.e. the end of Nasser’s reign) as the beginning of an unbalanced relationship between human faith and reason,⁸¹ and a rift between intellectuals and the clergy.

II.

In this section, I would like to give a brief account of Sartre and de Beauvoir’s visit to Egypt and highlight, on the one hand, the intellectual arena that was already in place and, on the other hand, the social and cultural issues that might have affected the guests. Evidently, this section would have benefited from a first person’s account of the meetings that took place between all three thinkers. Unfortunately, this has not been possible to obtain due to the limited information available, lack of resources, poor documentation and facilities. In 1925, it was only by chance that the young al-Hakim was lucky enough to arrive in France in the midst of French Avant Garde. From biographical material and an examination of the repertory of the theatres involved in the Cartel created by Louis Jouvet,⁸² al-Hakim, as a devoted theatre-goer, saw most plays acted in Paris between 1925 and 1928. R. Long wrote of al-Hakim’s trip that on arrival at the Collège des Lois in the autumn of 1925, the still introverted Hakim felt liberated. He immersed himself in everything Parisian and chose not to complete his law degree.

He undertook no organised academic programme, attending only lecture-courses on subjects which attracted him (including a good many on art and one given by James Joyce on the history of English poetry), and eventually failed to obtain the doctorate he had

⁷⁹ Darwish, Adel. p.4.

⁸⁰ The television programme was not the only mean that Shaykh Sha’rawi used to reach millions; he also took part in interviews and made accessible audio cassettes with the financial aid he received from his network of wealthy Islamic fundamentalists in Saudi Arabia and parts of the Middle East.

⁸¹ In 1987, in an interview held in London with Shaykh Sha’rawi by ‘Adel Darwish (of World Media UK), Darwish claimed that the programme had succeeded in “transforming the public opinion in Egyptian society from liberalism to a medieval repression, as Egyptian writer Ibrahim Issa, puts it in his book “Turbans and Daggers” (1994), which examined the dual effect of fundamentalists’ campaign of terror and that of “terrorising the collective mind” through media evangelism. The result is the “Islamisation” of society by stealth while the government remained complacent, to the horror of liberal intellectuals and human rights activists.

⁸² Noted in G.V.Tutungi’s thesis on al-Hakim in 1966 which is a comparative study submitted to the department of comparative literature at Indiana University.

ostensibly set out for: al-Hakim consequently noted in his epistolary *Zahrat al-'Umr*, 'My nature is made to fly in space, not to fall into the chains of doctorates and limited university knowledge.'⁸³

Sartre was at the time twenty years old and a student at the École Normale, where he took the role of Lanson in a play titled *Le Desastre de Langson*.⁸⁴ There is no evidence that proves that al-Hakim saw this play or encountered Sartre at this point; however, in al-Hakim's autobiographical essay he noted that he had indulged in the Parisian life-style to its fullest, attending plays and meeting with intellectuals. He claimed that he had found it very difficult to resist the charms of the popular literary-philosophical cult of the 'ungodly existentialists' who played such a significant role in the resistance during the Nazi occupation of France in WWII. The contrast in culture was clearly significant. It is evident that al-Hakim's Islamic upbringing and educational background had failed to offer him, in Egypt, the same exciting and challenging opportunity to develop his fondness of literature, the arts and philosophy which he had always longed for, and which he now found in France. And yet, almost contradicting himself, his writings from the mid- 40s onwards reflected his admiration of the West and, at the same time, showed to a certain extent his criticisms and disapproval of what he explicitly referred to as Europe's 'Godlessness'. For this reason, I believe that the contradictions in al-Hakim's thought and writings were due to his attempts to try to combine the ideas he so much admired from the West with the ideas that he was brought up to cherish and believe in from the East. This was an ongoing conflict that had cost al-Hakim many years of his life in dedication and perseverance as a writer and philosopher. For example, when asked about his contradictory beliefs, he said that the weight of the pervasive cultural struggle and the intellectual voracity which seized hold of him in Paris had left him questioning his past and future. He wrote:

The tragedy became evident to my eyes one day when I was analysing myself and it occurred to me that only a minor proportion of the life I was living was my own, the greater proportion being that mixture, kneaded like dough, of *contradictory elements* deposited in the generative fluid of which I was formed.⁸⁵

⁸³ Long, Richard. *Tawfiq al-Hakim: Playwright of Egypt*. London: Ithaca, 1979.

⁸⁴ Sartre says of this period: "Communist students at the time did not appeal to Marxism or even mention it in their examination fearing that they would fail. The horror of dialectic was such that GWF Hegel himself was known to us. Teacher, L. Brunschwig, in his *La Conscience Occidentale* devoted no more than a few pages to Hegel and not a word about Marx." See Busch, Thomas W. *The Power of Consciousness and the force of Circumstances in Sartre's philosophy*. (1990) Library of Congress Catalogue in publication.

⁸⁵ See al-Hakim, Tawfiq. (1992) *Sijn al-Umr (The Prison of life: An autobiographical essay)*. Translated by Pierre Cachia, The American University in Cairo Press (AUC).

And on the French culture he said:

I do not dress like the rest and I do not smoke because it is a habit much in evidence. Perhaps I would smoke if the rest gave up.⁸⁶

Di-Capua claims that no one could have guessed that what appeared as ‘the decline of Arab existentialism’ would be in the hands of its own advocate, Sartre himself. It is believed that after Sartre’s visit to Egypt with Simone de Beauvoir (from the 25th of February to the 13th of March 1967), and shortly after the Six Day War with Israel, Sartre “abruptly withdrew his support from his Arab interlocutors and sided with Israel”.⁸⁷ This did not signal the decline of Arab existentialism (because it continued to influence many writers during this period) as much as it assigned a negative stigma to Sartre’s name as a traitor. For many Arab intellectuals, this was a betrayal. The reason for Sartre’s visit to Egypt, according to *al-Ahram* newspaper, was “to acquaint the European philosopher with the Egyptian view of the Arab-Israeli conflict, as well as to offer him first-hand experience of the ‘Arab path to socialism’ Egypt was embarked on at the time.”⁸⁸ It was also believed that they were invited in order to promote global culture and encourage an exchange of knowledge. In brief, this was how the event was documented in a typical Egyptian national newspaper:

In 1967 Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir visited Egypt at the invitation of Muhammed Hassanein Haykal, then chairman and editor-in-chief of *al-Ahram*, during which they visited Aswan, Luxor and Palestinian refugee camps in Gaza. They were received by Nasser, met members of the country's intellectual community, and were entertained by writer Tawfiq al-Hakim at the Pyramids.⁸⁹

Below are rare images which show al-Hakim with the guests on two separate occasions. It is not implausible that al-Hakim accompanied his guests on other occasions as well, but these were not documented.⁹⁰ It is difficult to say whether this encounter with al-Hakim was their first or whether they had previously met with him during his trip to Paris in 1925, or even on one of the many visits that al-Hakim had made to Paris between the two dates,⁹¹ i.e. 1925 to 1967.⁹² Nevertheless, despite their doctrinal differences, there are some common traits which

⁸⁶ Ibid

⁸⁷ Di-Capua, Yoav. p.1064

⁸⁸ *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 13-19 April 2000, Issue No. 477.

⁸⁹ See appendix 2 for an archive image of the official announcements of the guests’ arrival at Cairo’s airport. <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2008/889/cu1.htm> [accessed 20/06/2014]

⁹⁰ Most pictures of the visit are from the archive of *al-Ahram* and from the personal collection of Lilianne al-Kholi.

⁹¹ Al-Hakim returned to Paris in 1936. There is evidence in his autobiography to show that he was a regular traveller to France and other parts of Europe.

⁹² In 1959, he was appointed the U.A.R.’s representative to UNESCO in Paris where he lived for a year or so.

in varying degrees Sartre and de Beauvoir both shared with al-Hakim. These traits are manifested in his equilibrium doctrine and more specifically in his book *Equilibrium*.

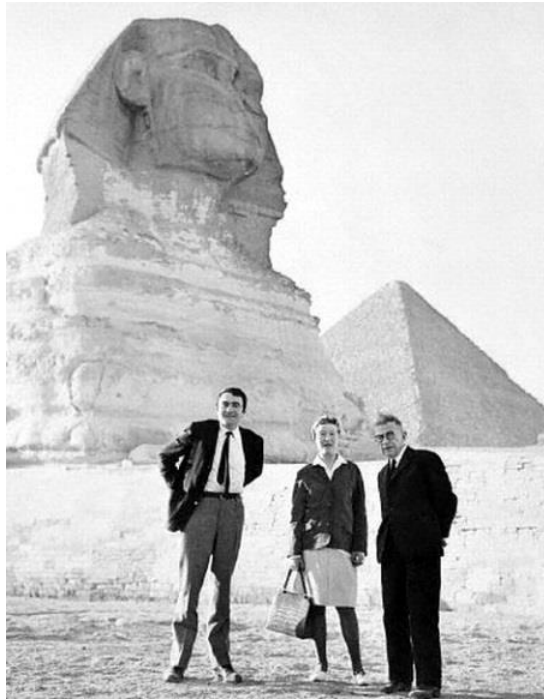


(Fig.1.) A group photo upon the guests' arrival at Cairo airport



(Fig.2.) Left to right: de Beauvoir, Sartre, al-Hakim, and Haykal⁹³

⁹³ Muhammed Hassanein Haykal served as editor-in-chief of *al-Ahram* daily (Between August 1957 and 1974).



(Fig.3.) Left to right: Lanzmann,⁹⁴ de Beauvoir and Sartre



(Fig.4.) Left to right: Haykal, al-Hakim, Sartre, de Beauvoir and Okasha⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Image taken from *The Patagonian Hare: A Memoir by Claude Lanzmann*, Translated by Frank Wynne. Lanzmann was invited as a journalist and as Sartre's friend who also sat on the editorial committee of Sartre's magazine *Les Temps Modernes*. Although he was 17 years younger than Beauvoir and 20 years younger than Sartre, Lanzmann quickly took his place within the ménage, installed by Beauvoir in her own apartment and was brought along on her decorous vacations with Sartre." See: http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/12/books/review/the-patagonian-hare-by-claude-lanzmann.html?pagewanted=2&_r=0.

⁹⁵ Tharwat Okasha, a prominent figure known for owning a theatrical company "Okasha group" and as an intellectual who helped al-Hakim to stage many of his plays.



(Fig.5.) *Left to right: Lanzmann, de Beauvoir and Sartre on a Nile cruise*



(Fig.6.) *Left to right: de Beauvoir, Former President Nasser and Sartre in Nasser's Heliopolis residence*



(Fig.7.) *Watching a scene from 'Huis clos' at Cairo's Theatre Institute*



(Fig.8.) Sartre giving a public lecture at Cairo University



(Fig.9.) Sartre with de Beauvoir and Lanzmann at the Ben Ezra Synagogue in Cairo



(Fig.10.) Left to right: de Beauvoir, al-Hakim and Sartre

Moreover, in her memoir *Tout Compte Fait* (1972) de Beauvoir gives an account of the event in details. Below is an extract.

We had been invited to go to Egypt by Haykal, Nasser's friend and spokesman and the editor of *al-Ahram*. Dusk was falling as we landed [in Cairo]. We were welcomed by Haykal, a short, broad-shouldered, jolly man, very brown and energetic, and by the elderly Tawfiq al-Hakim (his name means the philosopher's success)⁹⁶ whose amusing *Journal d'un substitute* [*Yawmiyat Na'ib fi al-Aryaf*] had been published in *Les Temps modernes* fifteen years before: he was primarily a playwright, and he was very well known in Egypt.⁹⁷ On his white head he wore a beret. He was said to be a misanthrope, but he cheerfully went about with us whenever it was not too tiring. [Journalist] Lutfi al-Kholi was also at the airport with his young and agreeable wife Liliane, who belonged to the state tourist organisation -- she was to be our guide and interpreter. We were also introduced to Dr [Louis] 'Awad and his wife. After a short press conference we got into Haykal's car and he took us to Shepherd Hotel, with the Nile only a few steps away. The river looked much the same as any other, but this was the true Nile, and it seemed fabulous that I was actually seeing it with my own eyes.

We took part in many discussions on Egypt's current problems. We met the editorial staff of *al-Tali'a*; the minister of culture; 'Ali Sabry, the head of the Socialist Union, the single party to which all Egyptians automatically belong; some Marxists and a variety of public figures. When we were present, no one questioned the existence of a single party, the absence of trade union activity, or the policy of state-direction. They were essentially concerned with the difficult struggle against the feudal landowners, with over-population, and above all with the existence of a 'new class' which has taken the place of the former bourgeoisie but which is also composed of privileged people. The greater part of industry has been nationalised, but the state needs large numbers of executives and technicians, and to obtain their services it is forced to pay them highly. The more the country develops the larger becomes this category of profiteers; and they have to be tolerated because they are necessary. The members of this 'new class' are individualists and reactionaries who formerly belonged to the petite bourgeoisie.

Towards the end of our stay Nasser received us at his residence in Heliopolis. We talked for three hours, sitting in a large drawing room and drinking fruit juice. Nasser had nothing of the 'white-toothed grin' that some ill-natured photographs gave him: his voice and his expression had a quiet, somewhat melancholy charm. It was said that his friendship for Haykal was explained by the contrast between their natures, the one overflowing with jovial vitality, the other uneasy, worried and turned in upon himself. Nasser listened attentively; and he answered without haste, weighing his words. I asked him about the status of Egyptian women. He was a feminist, and he had encouraged one of his daughters to carry on with her studies to an advanced level.

When the section of the [1962] Charter that called for equality between the sexes was being discussed, someone raised the objection, 'So every woman will have a right to four husbands, then?' Nasser replied that Islam first appeared in what was a widely polygamous society and that in fact the Koran, far from encouraging polygamy, tried

⁹⁶ Literally, the word "Tawfiq" in Arabic means "success" and the word "al-Hakim" means "the wise".

⁹⁷ In *al-Ahram's* archive, file no. 122 on al-Hakim, there are some coverage of al-Hakim's '*Usfur min al-Sharq, al-Aydi al-Na'imah, Izis* and *Ya Tali' al-Shajarah*.

to make it impossible by laying down a great number of restrictions. For his part, he would like to see it disappear. He believed in God, he added; but as far as religion was concerned it had thwarted him at every step. Sartre mentioned the eighteen young men who were then in prison [accused of being Communists]: he asked whether it would not be possible to hasten their trial. Nasser had obviously been told of this approach by Haykal; he smiled and said, 'A trial? By all means. But they run the risk of a ten-year sentence. Our idea was that it would be better to keep them in a little longer and then let them go quietly.' 'That would be the best solution of course,' said Sartre.⁹⁸

De Beauvoir resorted to giving her readers a gist of the trip and a description of whom she encountered.⁹⁹ In fact, some of the attendees of the events hosting the guests, Sartre and de Beauvoir, reported their frustration and discontent in letters addressed to the *al-Ahram* newspaper. The content of these letters reveal the social and cultural dynamics at the time of the visit and the contradictions around the reception of Sartre and de Beauvoir in various parts of Egypt. For example, in an excerpt in the archive of 'Books' (which is *al-Ahram's* weekly supplement online), Muhammed Aboulghar, Professor of Obstetrics at Cairo University writes:

Dear Sir - I read with great interest your coverage and comments on the visit Jean-Paul Sartre made to Egypt in 1967 in your last issue of 'Books' (13-19 April 2000). During the 1960s I was very interested in the philosophy of Sartre. Naturally, when his visit to Egypt was announced, I was very excited and decided to attend one of his meetings. I made it to the one which took place in the village of Kamshish, Menufiya.

On our way there, a few kilometres from Kamshish, we found that all the school children were standing on the sides of the roads waving Egyptian and French flags and were repeating the slogan "Vive Sartre, Vive Simone." The children looked very happy, probably because they were allowed out of school. When we arrived at the meeting hall which had belonged to al-Fiki family, we found seats with great difficulty. The hall was packed with farmers. They were shouting all the time with different slogans related to freedom, socialism and Franco-Egyptian friendship. One hour later Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Lotfi al-Khuli and several other high ranking officials from the Arab Socialist Union and *al-Ahram* came in. At that time there were around two thousand farmers outside the hall who could not find a place inside. They started to force themselves into the overcrowded hall. At that point the police interfered. This terrible scene of disorganisation and police interference was witnessed by all of us including the French guests. It was some time before the police managed to close the door to the hall. At last, Sartre gave a short speech which was translated into Arabic, and the floor was open for discussion. Several farmers stood up to read questions from pieces of papers they had, asking about the most sophisticated subjects of socialism and existentialism and the books written by Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir. It was very obvious that these farmers had been given the questions to read in correct Arabic. Naturally, Sartre understood that

⁹⁸ From *Tout Compte Fait*, translated as "All said and done" by Patrick O'Brian (London, 1974). In de Beauvoir's many volumes of autobiography, starting with *Mémoires d'une jeune fille rangée* in 1958 and ending with *Tout Compte Fait* in 1972, they constitute both an insider's record of French intellectual life from the 1940s to the 1970s.

⁹⁹ She was interviewed during her visit in Cairo by the Egyptian media and an article on her book *The Second Sex* was published by *al-Ahram* newspaper. See appendix 2 for the original article as it appeared to the public.

and answered politely but very briefly. Two hours later, when the meeting was through, I talked to several of the farmers who had "asked" questions to Sartre. Some of them had never heard of the philosopher before. I left Menufiyya frustrated by what had happened and I am sure that this *staged* performance had a negative influence on Sartre. Unfortunately, similar games are still being played regularly -- though at a smaller scale during field visits of Egyptian officials and foreign guests.

This passage shows the monopoly of the government on intellectual events and official visits, especially ones that involved foreign guests and that also concerned the image of Egypt as a country. And consequently, apart from the meeting of the minds between Sartre, de Beauvoir and other intellectuals in Cairo, unfortunately the encounter had very little outcome in respect of the current social or political situations in what are considered to be rural parts of Egypt. Secondly, it is increasingly difficult to ignore the fact that there was already an intellectual system in place in Egypt, particularly in Cairo, before Sartre and de Beauvoir's visit in 1967. The story of Arab existentialism did not simply begin with Badawi's promise to liberate the Arab self from the constraints of the colonizer. In fact, Egypt had an active intellectual scene even before Nasser's reign. The reason for this was that King Fuad University¹⁰⁰ was host to many foreign professors who had fled their country at a time of political unrest or in search of a permanent post. These professors, according to Di-Capua's article, included Russian émigré philosopher Alexandre Koyré,¹⁰¹ who left France and settled as a professor of Philosophy in the 1930s; André Lanlande,¹⁰² a Sorbonne retiree who taught from 1926 to 1940s; and French scholars Émile Bréhier and Louis Rougier.¹⁰³ I would like to argue that Koyré was primarily the one who initiated the reinvention of European existentialism in the Middle East and, most importantly, in Egypt at King Fuad University. Koyré, who was Badawi's supervisor, inspired him to write his masters' dissertation about death in existential philosophy, a topic which interested Koyré himself. Prior to his journey to Egypt, Koyré was already involved in promoting Hegel's and Heidegger's philosophies and meeting with those

¹⁰⁰ This was founded as a European-inspired civil university, in contrast to the religious university of al-Azhar, and became the prime indigenous model for other state universities. In 1928, the first group of female students enrolled at the university. It is known today as Cairo University.

¹⁰¹ Before moving to France in 1912, he was a member of Edmund Husserl's phenomenological circle in Göttingen and a follower of Heidegger's existentialism. He served as a bridge between German thought and French thought, between Husserl and Bergson. Like many European intellectuals, he could not find a teaching position at any major French universities, so he travelled to Egypt and joined the King Fuad University, which became public in 1925 and adapted new disciplines and widened its academic professionalization." See Yoav Di-Capua's footnote no.13, p. 1065.

¹⁰² He was also Koyré's former professor and for his commitment to Egyptian education he was conceded the position of chair by Islamic philosopher Mustafa 'Abd al Raziq. See Badawi, A. *Sirat Hayati (The Story of my Life)* (2000) 2 Vol. Beirut.

¹⁰³ Kleinberg, Ethan. *Generation Existential: Heidegger's Philosophy in France, 1927- 1961* (Ithaca, N.Y., 2005), p. 59.

who would soon become prominent names in the history of philosophy.¹⁰⁴ This is why I consider Koyré's role to be of crucial importance. Without a doubt, he gave Badawi a ready framework which was founded on the ideas of Karl Jaspers, Martin Heidegger, Gabriel Marcel, Jean Wahl, Emmanuel Lévinas and many others. Accordingly, Di-Capua says, Badawi, from this partnership, learned to prioritise the problem of being at the expense of knowing,¹⁰⁵ which marked the beginning of Arab phenomenology and existentialism.

To conclude this section, it is, in my view, no surprise that what Badawi promoted, namely that "true existence is that of the individual, and that the individual is the subject that necessitates freedom and the meaning of this freedom is the existence of possibility",¹⁰⁶ inspired Arab intellectuals, like al-Hakim, to defend their beliefs regardless of criticisms. And thus, the value of the achievements of authors like Badawi and al-Hakim resides not in innovation per se, but in their consistency and persistence. This is a trait that is reflected in their writings. Badawi not only attempted to create a merger between existential thought and Islamic philosophy (Sufism), but also to highlight the opportunity for Arab contemporary philosophical thought to (a) reinvent itself, (b) to reject dogma and, more importantly, (c) to have a new shape or form in which it can flourish. It is no wonder that al-Hakim found these goals worth pursuing. It is also worth noting that Badawi's *Al Zaman Al Wujudi (Existential Time)*, as I mentioned previously, was a widely accessible dissertation and its publication was an event that was covered by the *al-Ahram* Newspaper. Al-Hakim worked there as a journalist. He was writing literary and philosophical columns in abundance for the newspaper on a regular basis.¹⁰⁷ It is, thus, my belief that he was directly and indirectly influenced by the ideologies

¹⁰⁴ In 1933, he started a journal, *Recherches Philosophique* and a seminar where he taught Heidegger's philosophy and a new reading of Hegel. Participants were Alexandre Kojève, Henry Corbin (an Orientalist and first translator of Heidegger's *Being and Time*), and Raymon Aron (who allegedly introduced Sartre to phenomenology and Heidegger). Between the 50s and 60s participants were George Bataille, Jacques Lacan, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Eric Weil and many more. "What happened in this seminar changed the face of modern French philosophy." Kleinberg, Ethan. *Generation Existential: Heidegger's Philosophy in France*, pp. 65-66, p.69. See also, Descombes, Vincent. *Modern French Philosophy*, trans. L. Scott-Fox and J. M. Harding (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 9-48.

¹⁰⁵ He held that (a) existence precedes essence and (b) time is of the essence (humans are time-bound, the lived time experienced is different from measured clock-time) similar to Bergson's notion of *durée*. In Badawi's memoirs (pages 179-180), he noted that he would like to think of his work as "complementary to that of Heidegger". See Badawi's *Le Problème de la mort dans la Philosophie Existentielle*, pp. 1-7.

¹⁰⁶ He embraced Heidegger's *Dasein* and, interestingly, introduced it as 'Aniya', a medieval Islamic term to denote not a conscious subject but the way human beings are in the world among things in which a relationship is not that of one subject to another or between the subject and things, but a relationship between the subject and itself. See p. 239 in Badawi, A. *Dirasat fi-il Falsafa Al Wujudiya (Studies in Existential philosophy)* Cairo, 1966, pp. 236-263.

¹⁰⁷ He began writing columns for *al-Ahram* from 3rd January, 1938 titled "Debates". He was on the board of *al-Ahram* in 1961 during Nasser's era and became an honorary President of *al-Ahram*'s administrative board in 1981.

that affected authors at this time, by Badawi in particular, and more importantly, by the charm of European existentialist thought.

III.

In the final section of this chapter, the aim is to identify the influential figures that al-Hakim mixed with from the East at the height of his intellectual career and in the years just before he died in 1987 aged 89. Just as al-Hakim found his inspiration in Western works, he also found inspiration in many Eastern writers' works who were before him and whose names were prominent at his time. It is often said that al-Hakim was influenced by almost everything he read, saw, heard or encountered in one form or another: "everything found an echo in his work, making it a heterogeneous mass of disparate elements, the basis of which is almost always the romantic's search for completion and perfection."¹⁰⁸ His adaptations of Western plays such as *Pygmalion*, *King Oedipus (al-Malik Udib)*, *Shahrazad* and *People of the Cave (Ahl al-Kahf)* and presentation of them in an "Arabised" form marked him out from other writers. In doing this, he brought to light his proposition that the two systems of thought, European and Islamic -Western and Middle Eastern- are not as distinct as they may at first appear, and so confirmed his conception of "borderless thought". Folklore tales, stories and legends from Egyptian culture, biblical stories, hadiths and even verses from the Quran, as well as tales, stories and legends from the Western traditions, seem to have been his long-found treasures which he admitted in his autobiographical work to viewing as rich resources for his inspiration and writings. This tactic (adapting and using materials to inspire him) should not be looked down upon since it does not take away from al-Hakim's skill of combining ideas from Eastern and Western traditions, or from his status as a dedicated writer of multiple genres.

Unquestionably, there were many factors that affected al-Hakim as a writer and a philosopher. What I have concluded from my readings of his time in Paris, the intellectual capital of the world in 1925, is that on the one hand, Paris nurtured his growing fondness for literature and aided his search for the knowledge that he so desired, while, on the other hand, the East, continued to serve as a constant source for his beliefs and traditions. The latter may have held al-Hakim back, to a certain extent, from fully expressing himself and his ideas with ease as a thinker and writer of philosophical works such as *al-Ta'aduliya (Equilibrium)* (1955), *al-Ta'aduliyya wal-islam (Equilibrium and Islam)* (1983) and others. This is evident in the contradictory aspects of almost all of his writings. These particular works are, in my view, of

¹⁰⁸ This was noted by G. V. Tutungi in his thesis on al-Hakim in 1966, which is a comparative study submitted to the comparative literature department at Indiana University.

vital importance today, as they primarily mark a critical transition in al-Hakim's thought and reflect on the end of the intellectual renaissance in which they were written. The transition in al-Hakim's writings is evident from my chronology¹⁰⁹ and from the explanatory overview of trends in the following paragraphs.

First of all, during the 20s and the early 30s al-Hakim had followed the current fashion at the time of writing plays which were merely for entertainment. And from the mid-30s, after his return to Egypt from Paris, he began to introduce his readers to plays that were only meant to be read, a trend that he had admired and was emerging in Europe at the time. Al-Hakim continued to write these purely literary plays despite the criticisms he received from both his colleagues and critics. He did not leave behind his adaptations of the classics till after the late 30s, when he began to experiment with philosophy in his philosophical short stories and essays such as '*Ahd al-Shaytan* and *Himari qal Li*,¹¹⁰ published in 1938 and 1940. By the 50s, he had written four novels, a couple of essays, a short story collection and two main collections of plays. One collection was titled *Masrah al-Mujtama'*, published in 1950, and the other collection titled *al-Masrah al-Munawwa'* published in 1956. There is a clear transition in al-Hakim's literary career: he shifted his writing from merely following a trend to formulating his own philosophical views and making use of them in his literary outputs. This transition or shift in trends of writing also highlights the point at which al-Hakim was wholeheartedly in favour of close cultural contact with the West and, more specifically, with France as he began to make multiple trips to the country and became engrossed in ongoing explorations and adaptations of Western themes. As a result, we have an equilibrium doctrine and an author whose personality and work progressed dramatically from one stage to the other throughout his career adapting, merging and forming ideas from both traditions, Eastern and Western.

Secondly, generally speaking, the product of al-Hakim's hard work, the doctrine of equilibrium, is an interesting text to us today due to the historical context the work was published in and the political and social events of this period. For the purpose of this thesis, however, there are two main reasons why the text is of value. First, the doctrine outlines what al-Hakim saw as "the crisis of modernity", based on his own underlying comparative observations and analysis of East and West. And, secondly, the doctrine presents the consequences which al-Hakim saw as characteristic of his time (and, he predicts their

¹⁰⁹ See appendix 2, pp. 196-197.

¹¹⁰ There is a short article dated 20th March 1975 in *al-Ahram* newspaper that says that al-Hakim was angry at the Syrian government for allowing his book *al-Himer* (*The Donkeys*) to be plagiarised and published without his consent. This is one of many books where al-Hakim tells of an imaginary dialogue with his donkey.

reoccurrence on a rapid scale in the years to come). These consequences were, in his view, a result of factors that affected human nature on a personal level and social and political trends on a general level. What we, the readers, are faced with as a result is a doctrine of equilibrium, “*al- Ta ‘aduliyya*”, which argues that the crisis of modernity or of modern man has led directly or indirectly to trends such as atheism, and attempts to rationalise faith and submit oneself solely to the dominance of the mind instead of maintaining a “counter-balanced resistance” (i.e. a state of equilibrium). To clarify, in the final pages of al-Hakim’s book, he writes to clarify his use of the word “*al- Ta ‘aduliyya*” and says:

[*al- Ta ‘aduliyya* / Equilibrium] is not here to be taken as ‘equivalence’ in its linguistic sense, which means ‘equality’. Neither should it be understood as ‘moderation’ or ‘mediation’ in things. The meaning of equilibrium here is opposition. And the power of ‘equilibrium’ means the power of ‘the resisting opposition’ if the meaning of the word has not been understood accordingly, equilibrium lose its true meaning and goal. Equilibrium in this book is the opposing and resisting motion to another motion.

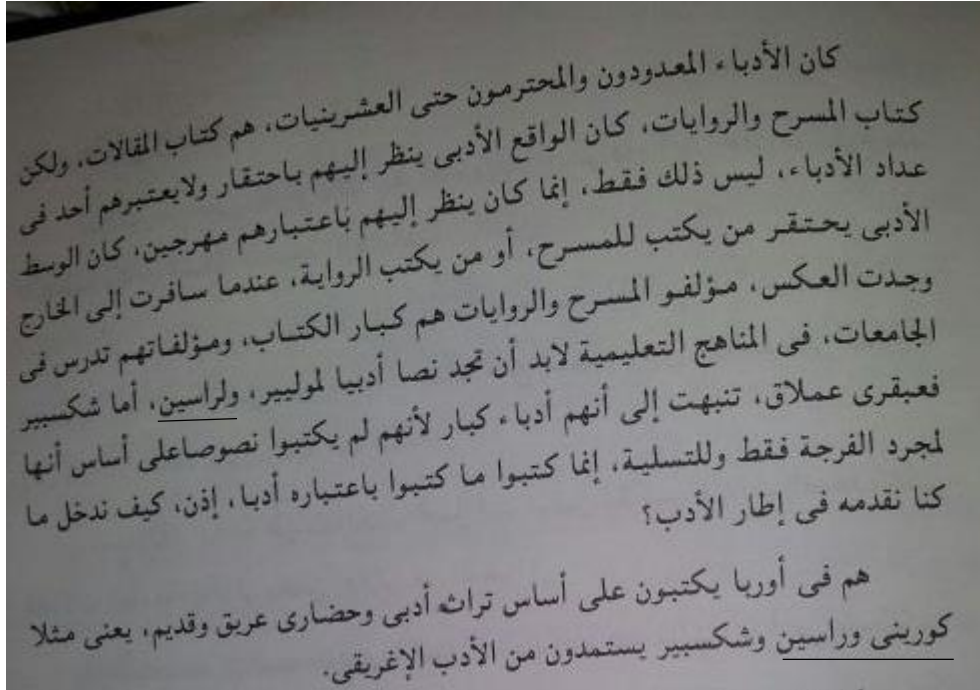
This resistance is between various dualities that al-Hakim points out such as good versus evil, the mind versus the heart (reason versus faith), human will versus divine will and the power of expression versus the power of explanation. His predictions during this period reveal something significant about the trends that affect human nature and the social and political predicaments that continue to haunt modern man, regardless of whether this is the case in the East or in the West.

Thirdly, in order to support my argument that al-Hakim found his inspiration in Eastern and Western traditions, I would like to offer my own translation of an excerpt that I have come across written by al-Hakim himself, reflecting on Egyptian culture and Western adaptations through his own comparisons between the East and the West. These passages also highlight social and cultural constraints on Egyptian authors at the time. He writes:

Until the 1920s, respected authors were those who wrote articles for newspapers. Those who wrote plays or novels were looked down at and considered unworthy of the title of an “author”. They were “the clowns”, as the intellectual circle used to call them and despise them. When I travelled abroad, I found the opposite. Playwrights and novelists were famous and their works were taught in universities and through the educational curriculum. There was always a text or two by Molière, Racine¹¹¹ or Shakespeare. Their greatness was not acquired by simply writing texts to be staged or for mere entertainment, but rather they wrote knowing that they were writing a work of literature. So how did we, Egyptians, introduce our own work to the literary canon? In Europe, they wrote on the basis that an ancient literary and cultural heritage was already

¹¹¹ In order to clarify speculations regarding the figures al-Hakim refers to, I provided an image of the text and underlined the figures in question.

established by writers Corneille,¹¹² Racine and Shakespeare. These writers adapted works from Greek literature. Greek theatre presented myths.



Al-Hakim continues to write:

And because we do *not* have myths in our Arab heritage, I resorted to adaptations from the Quran such as in the case of *Ahl al-Kahf*. I figured that this was our real Arab heritage. I also adapted Arabian tales from *A Thousand and One Nights*. Doesn't our [Egyptian] heritage seem similar to that of myths which began with the works of Homer and others? It is true that I re-presented Ali Baba, an adaptation from *A Thousand and One Nights*' tales, but what I took from it was the comical side, the entertainment which appealed to the audience and was right at the time. When I revisited the work again, I found in these tales *Shahrazad*, but I only adapted ideas from it. She wanted to awaken the mighty Shahrayar from his ignorance to an extent where he deserted our temporal world in search for the secrets of our existence. When she attempted to retrieve him from his fantasies and bring him back to reality, it was too late. Thus, through a contrast between fantasy and reality, I brought to light the intriguing tale which unfolded a chain of events. I did not clarify my intentions in rewriting the tale by publishing an introduction to *Shahrazad* because I was at the time working in a governmental post. I feared that they¹¹³ would say I returned to theatre, which was in their eyes trivial and cheap, something that is *not* expected of a respectable man in government.¹¹⁴

From this passage, one concludes that al-Hakim's appreciation of Western literature and philosophy, and his eagerness to compare and contrast between cultures, inspired him to

¹¹² See image of the text; note that there is a typo in the original Arabic.

¹¹³ This refers to those who disapproved amongst colleagues, family members and critics.

¹¹⁴ Gamal al- Gheitany, (1998) *Al-Hakim Reminiscences*, Supreme council of culture, pp. 130- 143.

merge what he already had access to from the Eastern literary heritage and what he experienced and learnt from Western heritage. Moreover, in an article by al-Enany, al-Hakim's encounter with Europe is described as one that led "to unending probing of the self."¹¹⁵ This is evident in al-Hakim's journalistic writings during the 30s and 40s, which are scattered in numerous collections of essays. The encounter was to provide al-Hakim with the inspiration he needed to begin his literary and philosophical journey, borrowing Western themes and undertaking philosophical investigations. This, according to al-Hakim's autobiography,¹¹⁶ he does not deny. The parallelism between al-Hakim's life and his writings in his novel *'Usfur min al-Sharq* (1938) is one that should not be believed in the strictest sense. *'Usfur min al-Sharq* does not by any means convey al-Hakim's tolerance or openness to Western ideas. But, on the contrary, if we agree with al-Enany that the novel mirrored al-Hakim's life experiences, especially his experiences of living in France, then the novel shows al-Hakim's strong sense of nationalism and rejection of everything that is Western at this period, instead of one of admiration. Let us assume that this is true of the early period of al-Hakim's life, precisely true of the period prior to his trip and discovering more about French literature, philosophy and the arts. From the early 40s onwards, al-Hakim's writings convey the opposite (that is: an indulgence in everything Parisian). I would even go further to claim that the image portrayed by al-Hakim of himself during this period (as evident in his letters to his French friend André, reminiscing his time in Paris) is that his intellectual and artistic development, began almost entirely under the influence of Western culture. Now, the question that seems to posit itself is can one consider a work of fiction to be reflective of an author's entire life or career? Surely not.

The question that al-Enany should have considered instead is whether the novel merely shows al-Hakim's tactful experimentations with "the treatment of cultural encounter/clash between East and West and the notion of the spirituality of the East and materialism of the West",¹¹⁷ which was in fact a popular trend and a current subject at the time, or whether it was the beginning of something else.¹¹⁸ If we take al-Hakim's novel, a work of fiction, and rely on it to extract anything constructive about al-Hakim's character, his progression or career development (or even his relationship with the West), our assessment will not only be partial, but also it will be unreliable. This is because the assessment will be primarily based on a work of fiction in which the content

¹¹⁵ Al-Enany, Rasheed. "Tawfiq al-Hakim and the West: A New Assessment of the Relationship." *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 27 No. 2 (Nov, 2000) pp.165-175, www.jstor.org/stable/826090 (accessed 04/03/2013) See p, 170.


¹¹⁶ Al-Hakim, Tawfiq. (1992) *Sijn al-'Umr (The Prison of life: An autobiographical essay)*. Translated by Pierre Cachia. American University in Cairo (AUC) Press.

¹¹⁷ Ibid p. 166

¹¹⁸ For example, al-Hakim's transitional stage from youth to adolescence (intellectual maturity) and the beginning of an artist's search for the self.

carries within it the possibility of being true or false. Moreover, our assessment will fail to show the various shifts that occurred during al-Hakim's life as a whole. In fact, the novel, which was written in the late 1930s, has only been able to highlight, if we agree with al-Enany in the first place al-Hakim's observations or reflections on a period in which Egypt was undergoing social and political pressures, on the one hand from the West and on the other from neighbouring countries such as Israel. It is, thus, natural that ' *Usfur min al-Sharq* echoes what an author like al-Hakim felt to be right at a time of a nation's struggle.¹¹⁹

I shall try now to show links between al-Hakim and the influential figures from the East whom he mixed with and was influenced by throughout his career, whether as acquaintances or close friends. According to Pierre Cachia's translation of al-Hakim's autobiography *Sijn al-Umr* (*The Prison of Life*), Cachia claimed that al-Hakim "belongs to a generation of Arab writers who were remarkably bold in their questioning of the values inherited from their immediate past and immensely influential in pioneering a form of modernism manifestly and often frankly shaped by the example of Western Europe."¹²⁰ In this rich period in Egyptian history,¹²¹ there was a rise in intellectuals who clearly had profound views and were, in various ways, influenced by the West in one way or another (because they were either educated in French schools in Egypt or sent abroad to be educated in France). These intellectuals, along with al-Hakim, were:

				
	Tawfiq al-Hakim	Taha Husayn	Naguib Mahfouz	Yusuf Idris
Born	1898	1889	1911	1927
Died	1987	1973	2006	1991

¹¹⁹ There are speculations that he wrote this during his time in Paris. The story tells of a girl who sells cinema tickets and how she broke his protagonist's heart. Al-Enany considers this story to be an allegory for al-Hakim's own experience and relationship with Western women, especially one encounter that mirrors the story's details.

¹²⁰ Al-Hakim, Tawfiq. (1992) *Sijn al-Umr; (The Prison of life: An autobiographical essay)*. Translated from the Arabic by Pierre Cachia. American University in Cairo (AUC) Press.

¹²¹ The Egyptian *Nahda*, "renaissance" or "rebirth", is best known for its renewed interest in Egyptian antiquity. The cultural liberation began on the hands of Rifa'at al-Tahtawi who introduced "Enlightenment" ideas (i.e. secular political rights, authority and rights) to his students and the Egyptian intelligentsia. His ideas, as a modernist and prominent writer, contributed to Egypt's autonomous development as a sovereign and independent nation-state.

There are two main reasons why I believe al-Hakim's writings stood out from those of other authors of his age. First, al-Hakim was particularly explicit and bold in questioning philosophically social and political issues that crossed his path. And secondly, he made no division between philosophical and religious investigations: meaning that he saw no restrictions on discussing religious matters openly and in a philosophical manner. The latter is an attitude that has of course angered many religious institutions and members of the public and created a negative stigma that was gradually but steadily assigned to his writings. Unlike others, he was unbiased by his Eastern roots and, perhaps in taking a position of an observer in most cases, he was able to reflect with frankness and openness on his experiences of both worlds, the East and the West. He was after all a more travelled author than Husayn, Mahfouz or Idris. Below I advance an overview of al-Hakim's relationship with these other writers and provide some images to support my claim that there was indeed a dialogue between al-Hakim and other Egyptian authors of this period, and, in particular, intellectual meetings between them along with a few literary collaborations.



(Fig 11) From left to right: Egyptian Singer Um Kulthoum, Naguib Mahfouz and al-Hakim¹²²

¹²² On Naguib Mahfouz's 50th birthday celebration at al-Ahram Newspaper, he was seated between Egyptian singer Um Kulthoum and Tawfiq al-Hakim.



(Fig 12) al-Hakim with Naguib Mahfouz and Yusuf Idris.

First, Taha Husayn,¹²³ the oldest of the three, had a strong relationship with al-Hakim.¹²⁴ It was not, however, as widely discussed as the relationship which was evident in the media between Mahfouz and al-Hakim. Nevertheless, in an article by an Italian reviewer,¹²⁵ he wrote that the collaboration between Husayn and al-Hakim in his novel *The Enchanted*

¹²³ He was known as the dean of Arabic literature. He was sent to study in France and became the first Egyptian to have obtained an MA from the University of Montpellier and a PhD from the Sorbonne despite being blind and poor. His career focused on investigating pre-Islamic Arabic poetry and literature and theories of criticism in Arabic history. And he occasionally wrote political and social articles attacking poverty and ignorance in national newspapers. In 1926 his book *Pre-Islamic poetry* got him dismissed in the mid- 30s from his university post as a result of claims he had made about the pre-Islamic period which fundamentalists objected to. He continued teaching, advising the Minister of education and held a post as a director of the University of Alexandria until he retired in 1944. There are some translations of his work by Mona al- Zayyat in print.

¹²⁴ In al-Hakim's letter to Husayn in September 1933, he wrote: "We are *not* issuing decrees in these hastily written letters, but raising questions and offering hypotheses which dedicated researchers will collect and gather together when the nation wakes." (p.70) See R. Long, p.181; Background and assessment.

¹²⁵ Veglieri, Laura and Rubinacci, Roberto. "*al-Qasr al-Mashour*" in Naples, Istituto Orientale, Taha Husayn (Naples, 1964), pp. 93-113.

Palace published in 1936 was a successful one. The authors' styles complemented one another in such a way that the imaginative symbolism and humour of al-Hakim was combined with the thought, sentiment and style of Husayn. The book, therefore, benefited from both authors' talent and, accordingly, had a delightful discussion of time, art and women. This shows how al-Hakim was open to dialogue with peers and colleagues of his age and in fact enjoyed a close friendship with some whilst maintaining a strictly professional relationship with others. Secondly, Idris,¹²⁶ who was considered by many people to be the literary equal of Naguib Mahfouz, came to fame when he received Naguib Mahfouz's medal for literature for his novel *City of Love and Ashes* in 1997.¹²⁷ It is worth noting that Idris was openly a leftist who, although he initially supported Nasser's reforms, was imprisoned later in 1954 for opposing Nasser's policies¹²⁸. His relationship with al-Hakim flourished when he realised that he shared with al-Hakim a love of theatre (although his theatrical contributions did *not* appear until the late 50s). The reason for the delay, I believe, was the negative stigma given to theatre and playwrights at the time. Al-Hakim, for example, says:

I saw before me no scope for staging varied plays I had written. The only companies still active were amateur ones, such as the Association of Patrons of the Theatre. I sent them *A Bullet from the Heart* which I wanted to be a departure from the adapted comedies, which were mere caricatures, depending for effect on verbal quips and farcical surprise turnabouts in action. I wanted lifelike characters to be the sole source of effect, but regardless of my effort, the play remained unproduced.¹²⁹

Similarly, Idris felt the same lack of opportunity and support for his theatrical work. Unlike al-Hakim, he decided to delay publishing any of his plays and immerse himself instead in writing essays on plays, titled "Towards a New Arabic Theatre," where "he sought to create a uniquely Egyptian dramatic form using *colloquial* language and elements of traditional folk drama and shadow theatre."¹³⁰ And in the following years, he made public *The Critical Moment* (1958), *Al-Farafir* (1964) which was translated to English as *The Farfoors* in 1974, and *The Striped Ones* (1969) which is a series of plays.¹³¹

¹²⁶ Idris worked originally as a medical doctor between 1945 and 1951, during which time he wrote about social and political reforms that led to the 1952 revolution. Like other authors, he felt the need to hold a position that was considered to be respectable by society. If he did not work within government like al-Hakim or within the ministry of Education like Hussein, he would work within the medical system.

¹²⁷ See Idris, Yusuf. 1999. *City of Love and Ashes*, The American University in Cairo Press (English translation)

¹²⁸ In the same year, Idris published an anthology of short stories, some of which were *The Cheapest Nights* followed by *Isn't That So?* Published in 1957.

¹²⁹ Al-Hakim, Tawfiq. (1992) *Sijn al-Umr. (The Prison of Life: An autobiographical essay)*, translated from Arabic by P. Cachia. AUC press. pp. 188-189.

¹³⁰ Roger, Allen (ed.), *Critical Perspectives on Yusuf Idris* (1992); Dalya, Cohen-Mor, *Yūsuf Idrīs: Changing Visions* (1992). See also Idris' novels, *The Forbidden* (1959) and *The Sin* (1962) which reflect his religious views.

¹³¹ Idris was nominated several times for the Nobel Prize, but he never received it. When Mahfouz received it instead in 1988, Idris objected and claimed that he was disfavoured by the Swedish Academy because of his

Last but not least, Mahfouz was, unquestionably, not only the best known author nationally, but also internationally after becoming a Nobel Prize winner.¹³² Like others, Mahfouz influenced al-Hakim and fellow writers of his period. When Mahfouz was approached by Gordon,¹³³ who was writing a book titled *Mahfouz's Existential themes*, Mahfouz told Gordon that he had never been labelled an existentialist or considered himself to be one (unlike Badawi and others for instance who explicitly claimed so). This was because the Nobel laureate considered himself to be first and foremost a story-teller, as evident from his stories, novels or novellas. In 1989, once again in correspondence with Mahfouz, Gordon reported that Mahfouz had informed him that Western writers such as “Shakespeare, Goethe, Tolstoy, Proust, Faulkner, Hemingway, Kafka and ancient Greek tragedies” have greatly influenced the writings of his generation.¹³⁴ Mahfouz's protagonists are depicted “struggling with the absurdities of contemporary existence”, a notion that was adapted from Western literature and introduced to Egyptian culture in different forms (since the birth of Arab existentialism).¹³⁵ The absurdity of life seems to have been a constant underlying theme throughout the works of both authors Mahfouz and al-Hakim. And thus, in agreeing with Gordon, it is easy to see

explicit anti-Israeli views. This was possibly true at the time as Egypt had just turned to the United States for assistance to resolve and negotiate a peace treaty with Israel and had as well asked for economic support. There was no doubt that many Arab authors, like Idris, had expressed their discontent and concerns about a relationship with Israel, yet these concerns were dismissed by those in power. Idris, regardless, continued to write in various political magazines and newspapers and appear as a public figure on national television to talk about social and political reforms. This has contributed to the fact that two of Idris' collections, *In the Eye of the Beholder: Tales of Egyptian Life from the Writings of Yusuf Idris* (1978) and *Rings of Burnished Brass* (1984), became widely translated. Similarly, in al-Hakim's case, translator Denys Johnson-Davies has translated and edited a book titled *The Essential Yusuf Idris: Masterpieces of the Egyptian Short story*. This was published in 2009.

¹³² Compared to al-Hakim, during Mahfouz's 70 years literary career, he published approximately 34 novels and 350 short stories and only five plays. In fact, his literary career began with his first series of historical tales, '*Abath al-Aqdar (The Futility of Fate)*' set at the time of the Pharaohs. The series was published in 1939 during WWII and received little notice.

¹³³ Gordon, Haim. (1990) *Naguib Mahfouz's Egypt: Existential Themes in His Writings*. Greenwood Press, chapters 1, 5 and 7. See also his appendix pp.131- 138. Gordon and Mahfouz were involved in Israeli-Arab peace efforts. Mahfouz was one of the few who supported former President Anwar Sadat's peace treaty with Israel.

¹³⁴ See Gordon's final chapter “Coping with the absurdity of existence”, pp. 113- 130.

¹³⁵ To give a specific example, Mahfouz's experimentation with the absurd is evident in his short story *Under the Shed* which is also similar in style to *Ya Tali' al-Shajarah* (1962) a play written by al-Hakim. However, in the late 1940s, publications consisting of more than forty articles dealt with philosophical and psychological issues that some claim were heavily influenced by Henri Bergson. See Gordon's appendix, where he refers to Mahfouz's works “What is Philosophy?”, “Bergson's Philosophy” and “Pragmatism”, all written by Mahfouz and which were- and still are- available in print, but only in Arabic

Mahfouz's work, which was written in the absurd tradition,¹³⁶ in light of existentialism, or perhaps it may as well be called a "Kafkaesque tradition", as Gordon claims.¹³⁷

The most important transition, in my view, was not until the mid-50s, when both authors' careers, al-Hakim and Mahfouz's, took a different turn. On the one hand, according to Gordon, Mahfouz's name emerged as an important writer as fame smiled on him in the Arab world. He received the State Prize for Literature in 1957 for his trilogy *A House in Cairo*, published in 1952.¹³⁸ And in the West,¹³⁹ he received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1988.¹⁴⁰ At the same time, on the other hand, the controversy around al-Hakim's philosophical narratives, which was at its height, hindered him from achieving the same fame, or even anything close to it. *Arini Allah* (1953), *Equilibrium* (1955) *Equilibrium and Islam* (1983), *A Dialogue with the Planets* (1974) and *al-Ahadith al-Arba'ah* (1983) display al-Hakim in a very different light from other writers, and critics did not approve of this difference. I will present evidence for this in due course.¹⁴¹ Some might even argue today that in allowing the publication of these works, al-Hakim had doomed his career.¹⁴² This, I believe, is far from the truth. From his perspective, as well as mine, these works are an expression of not only following his own mind and heart in founding his own doctrine of equilibrium, but also are an explicit rejection of conforming to the norm or what was expected of him as an Egyptian and as a Muslim writer. The price that he had to pay for his daring attitude was cost him the international recognition which he, in my view, deserves, and the wider distribution of his publications.

To conclude, Mahfouz and al-Hakim, like their fellow writers, made their thoughts widely accessible for others of this golden period to adapt from and tailor to their needs. It is no wonder that the overshadowing negativity towards a movement like existentialism, which had extended beyond Europe, and its various trends and development over the preceding years,

¹³⁶ I am using the word, like Gordon, in its two meanings; metaphysical and social absurdity: first, the metaphysical absurdity of human existence articulated by Camus and emerging in Kafka's works, and secondly, social absurdity, also in Kafka's works, in the sense of "the absurd mess human beings made of their social, political and personal life." See Gordon, p. 115.

¹³⁷ This was true of al-Hakim's style in his play *Ya Tali' al-Shajarah*, which has led to him being referred to as "the father of the theatre of the absurd".

¹³⁸ A year before al-Hakim published one of five of his controversial works of this period, *Arini Allah* (1953).

¹³⁹ Gordon advised Mahfouz to try and get more of his books translated into European languages as they would sell well; Mahfouz replied "you're talking like my wife". When asked about the \$390,000 received from the Nobel Prize award, he said "That is my wife's job." See Gordon, Haim (1990) noted in his appendix, p. 132 that many of Mahfouz's novels were translated into Hebrew, providing welcome reading material for Israeli students of Arabic culture.

¹⁴⁰ Mahfouz declined travelling to Sweden to receive the Nobel Prize because of his ill health, age, diabetes and death threats from Muslim brothers targeting him. Instead, his two daughters flew there to receive it on his behalf. Former President Mubarak held a ceremony in Egypt, where Mahfouz also received a medal.

¹⁴¹ Chapter four (p.157) outlines the criticisms that al-Hakim received as a result of making these works public.

¹⁴² See translations in chapter four of the letters that show influential figures' attempts to obstruct some of al-Hakim's publications.

overshadowed in some sense the efforts and the achievements of some of these writers. It is fair to say that the common criticisms that I have come across in Arabic texts assessing the works and views of writers of this period, which I will analyse in the fifth chapter of this thesis (especially the views of Yasser Hegazy,¹⁴³ mainly pinpoint al-Hakim's contradictory views (amongst other criticisms against him). What many readers have seen writers like al-Hakim accused of is not conforming to what was expected of them; i.e. to instruct. Al-Hakim's views were perhaps not contradictory as much as they aimed at bringing to light unfamiliar ideas. Mahfouz, for example, when asked if his works conveyed a particular message, replied: "No, my views are not what I wished to convey. If you ever find the views I express contradict what emerges in my books, don't believe me, and believe my books."¹⁴⁴ Thus, although the idea of an author contradicting himself in his works was a common one, it was held against al-Hakim due to the fierce stream of attacks against him by fundamentalists and clerics ever since the publication of *Arini Allah* in 1953. I will address this point in detail in due course, but what I can assert for now is that what made his situation worse is that a movement in Egypt referred to as "the awakening of Islam", which began to emerge in the early 70s, and its leaders, like Shaykh Abdel Hameed Keshk, Sha'rawy and others (whom I will identify in chapter four), continued to discredit the writings of al-Hakim even after he died.

Although during Nasser's reign authors were allowed to pronounce on political matters, the social and political arena greatly influenced, and indeed pressured, authors into altering the contents of their publications so as to conform to the norm and what was considered acceptable.¹⁴⁵ One may think in the first instance that there was fierce competition or rivalry between al-Hakim and like-minded authors of this period. I hope that in this section I have succeeded in showing the opposite. This was never the case, although it may have been true of other writers. Al-Hakim enjoyed an amicable intellectual dialogue between himself and many authors, especially those I have mentioned.¹⁴⁶ The distinction between these authors, in terms

¹⁴³ Some of the main articles are: Hegazy, Yasser. "Al-Hakim's conversation with God: A dare or a *faux pas*?" (2009) Muntada al-Muhamin al-'Arab (The Forum of Arab lawyers) <http://www.mohamoon-montada.com/Default.aspx?action=DISPLAY&id=90737&Type=3> (accessed 12/08/2014) and Fayez, Sameh (2014) "Tawfiq al-Hakim: The writer who spoke to God" *Al Tahrir* newspaper <http://www.altahrir.com/details.php> (accessed 18/07/2014) The latter article has links to videos of Shaykh 'abd al-Hamid Kishk attacking al-Hakim's work.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, p.18 quoted recollections from personal meetings with Mahfouz.

¹⁴⁵ On some occasions, al-Hakim attempted to withdraw a play and other literary works from becoming public. Mahfouz was lucky enough to have begun his literary career with writing short stories and novels instead of writing plays. Al-Hakim, on the other hand, since his return from Paris in the 30s, perceived the decline of the Egyptian theatre as an opportunity to intervene and revive theatre in order to fulfil his passion for plays and drama and convey his philosophy.

¹⁴⁶ See images pp 81- 83.

of ideas, influences and directions, was clear and evident in their works. Although they all experimented with multiple literary genres, i.e. novels, shorts-stories, articles, essays or plays, their general reputations today remains as follows: Husayn was an educational reformist, Idris was the father of the Arabic short story, Mahfouz was mostly a novelist and known in the West as a Nobel Prize winner, and finally, al-Hakim was known as the father of the theatre of the absurd. The latter, of course, is one who I see as more than a playwright and as someone who is worthy of our reconsideration and whose philosophical works deserve a thorough reassessment. These distinctions in reputation are formed by critics and the general public based on what they believe each author excelled at. The truth of the matter, however, is that the writings of all four authors, Husayn, Idris, Mahfouz and al-Hakim, overlapped between different genres as a result of a rich intellectual dialogue which they all enjoyed at this golden age.

CHAPTER ONE

AL-HAKIM'S EQUILIBRIUM DOCTRINE

*"My intention is not to convince you, but to invite you to think and to analyse."*¹⁴⁷

In this chapter, my aim is not only to introduce to the English speaking public Tawfiq al-Hakim as an Egyptian writer who attempted to consolidate in his writings ideas from the East and the West, but also to analyse, critically assess and examine his equilibrium doctrine and ask whether or not it offers the human being a solution or a way to overcome the consequences of what al-Hakim referred to as "the crisis of modernity". I shall argue, firstly, that al-Hakim is affected by Eastern and Western social and political ideologies which led him to this position, and, secondly, that the doctrine of equilibrium is a product of his experimentations with philosophical themes within a literary framework. I hope that in doing so, I will also be able to identify the philosophical traits in al-Hakim's work and outline Western influences that affected his character and doctrine. These influences were the main cause, in my view, for the criticisms that he, as an author and as a philosopher, incurred for making his doctrine and his beliefs available to the public. With this in mind, I conclude that the doctrine of equilibrium does not offer human beings a solution per se, but an understanding of al-Hakim's conception of our "tragic existence". To clarify, al-Hakim explains in his doctrine of equilibrium that man's state of being can be described as "tragic". It is so as a result of how one's existence is altered by external events and factors that are beyond one's control (i.e. age, time, knowledge of the truth or even death). Influenced by the Greek tragedies, al-Hakim also saw that one's life unfolds, often as a struggle, to lead to one's fate or destiny. In understanding one's status in life, finding the strength and the ability to cope with these struggles, one adapts, accordingly to al-Hakim, an "equilibrist" approach towards life. This is what I believe he hoped to achieve by writing "*al-Ta'duliyya*" (*Equilibrium*). He encourages readers to acknowledge that:

- (1) There are various hidden forces (in the form of obstacles and hindrances) which are out of human beings' control and which affect or change the course of one's life; some of these are, for example, age, time, death, the will of the "other" and the knowledge of the truth. These are mainly manifested in al-Hakim's dramatic works.
- (2) Regardless of any knowledge that failure is inevitable, resilience and striving against the unknown on a daily basis are both of crucial importance to one's transcendence (i.e. individual and social progress).

¹⁴⁷ Al-Hakim, Tawfiq, (1974) *Hadith ma'a al-Kawakib*; Cairo.

On this basis, it is my belief that the doctrine of equilibrium presents an approach to life where, in human beings' realisation and acceptance of the existence of hidden forces or a superior being,¹⁴⁸ they will be able "to transcend [their] being stage by stage, individually and socially."¹⁴⁹ This is an optimistic view, which was put forward by al-Hakim in his texts and which I intend to discuss further in the following chapters alongside some of Sartre's existentialist ideas such as the power of circumstances ("*la force des choses*") and, of course, the issue of human freedom.

Without further ado, the first section in this chapter will introduce *Equilibrium* in the hope that by making it accessible to English readers, I will revive the work, increase its readership and enhance its value and appreciation. The purpose of this introduction is also to accompany al-Hakim's translated text and to highlight aspects of the translated work which readers should take into account. I will then endeavour to outline al-Hakim's attacks on the changes that took place in attitudes and behaviour and become most apparent at the start of the modern age¹⁵⁰ in regards to, first, our status in the universe as superior creatures and, secondly, our belief in possessing absolute freedom. The second section sets up al-Hakim's doctrine of equilibrium, while the third section illustrates the ways in which al-Hakim's objections (i.e. criticisms of the modern age) are relevant to it and further supports my conclusion.

I.

An investigation of *Equilibrium* can be justified on the basis that it is a work that explicitly provides readers with al-Hakim's answers to questions directed to him by a reader regarding his doctrine of equilibrium. The book was published in 1955 and is written in the form of a philosophical dialogue between al-Hakim and an interlocutor. This is the reason why al-Hakim wrote his text in an informal manner, varying in themes and ideas. Some of the questions and answers are *not* necessarily philosophical in the strict sense. Nevertheless, they are of interest to us today because they reveal al-Hakim's position on various issues and reflect a number of intellectual debates which dominated this period. The main questions that are

¹⁴⁸ He uses the term "divine" forces to mean that which is "unknown". He also uses later on in his text the idea of the existence of "superior being" alternatively- also without direct reference to any particular religion and away from preconceptions of the "divine", i.e. God.

¹⁴⁹ The word "transcend" carries no religious meaning. Its use here means improving oneself (individual action) and improving society (social progress). It can also be understood as rising above a current condition and developing towards an improved one. See the translated work, *Equilibrium* (pp.13-52)

¹⁵⁰ According to al-Hakim, "the new age" is the age of significant revolutionary movements that occurred in many parts of Europe and the Americas, i.e. 18th C. He uses the term freely to signify the scientific and technological discoveries, the religious conflicts and the debates in modern states between the origins of science and faith.

important to our understanding of the doctrine of equilibrium (according to the order of their appearance in al-Hakim's text) are:

- (1) What is the general status of the human being in the universe as [he] imagined it to be?
- (2) What is the human being's status in society?
- (3) What is the reason why the "new age" is so imbued with materialism?

Accordingly, we, the readers, are led to ask:

1. What is the "crisis of modernity" from al-Hakim's perspective?
2. How is the "crisis of modernity" presented in the equilibrium doctrine and in al-Hakim's other works?

Al-Hakim seeks to justify his answers to question (1) and (2) based on his answers to the latter questions. It is worth noting that these answers are based on ideas that lingered in his mind from the late 1930s to early 1950s and were subtly expressed in some of his dramatic works published during this period. With this in mind, this section discusses al-Hakim's first claim that the new age is imbued with materialism. This bold claim, which readers might question from looking at al-Hakim's doctrine alone, leaves us wondering about possible reasons behind his position. His first argument is that scientific advances and the progress made by human beings in various fields of knowledge in past centuries has been an indication that the power of the mind has succeeded in dominating the power of the heart.¹⁵¹ But let us first ask: what does al-Hakim mean by these two forces, the power of the mind and the power of the heart? And secondly, what has led him to this conclusion?

In *Equilibrium*, al-Hakim describes the mind, on the one hand, as the domain of rational thinking where reason or logic resides, and it is also the domain which signifies the power of scientific and technological discoveries. By contrast, the heart is the domain where faith and human emotions reside; the heart also signifies the power of religion.¹⁵² The distinction between these two domains, the mind and the heart,¹⁵³ is not a novelty. It was discussed in early Eastern debates regarding where the soul resides: whether in the heart or in the mind?¹⁵⁴ This debate is not one that al-Hakim engages in. Instead, he uses this distinction in his doctrine of

¹⁵¹ This is the first of many dualities highlighted by al-Hakim. I will outline them in relation to his narratives in chapter two, p.118- 127.

¹⁵² Note that al-Hakim refrains from referring to a specific religion.

¹⁵³ His description is purely from a literary and artistic perspective which overlooks any other functions or qualities that both organs may have other than those that are important to him.

¹⁵⁴ See Goodman, Lenn E (2009) *Ibn Tufayl's Hayy Ibn Yaqzan: A Philosophical Tale*. University of Chicago Press.

equilibrium primarily to argue that there *is* an imbalance that has become most apparent at the start of the new age between these domains; the mind, on the one hand, and the heart, on the other. This mind and heart distinction is used by al-Hakim in a parallel analogy to also claim that there is a widening gap between science and faith. This, from his view is what causes “imbalance”; namely that science has progressed and continued to develop whilst religion took a much slower path which is one of many factors for the secularism of modern societies. He writes:

The evolutionary theory of Lamarck, Darwin and Spencer is not valid with regard to human existence without the realisation of our superior being. The growth of the human being’s mind and heart is a condition of this realisation according to the rule that dictates the evolution of the organ according to function. This is the human necessity that I realised on the basis that the human being is not alone in this universe. This necessity is what leads him to realise himself, discover the sources of his mental and spiritual strength, and develop and prepare it to face those mysteries and hidden forces that impress his mind and enchant his core. In this realisation, discovery and development, the human being progresses and changes in order to transcend his being stage by stage, individually and socially.¹⁵⁵ The human being, indeed, has developed according to his realisation of the superior using his mind and heart. The development of the heart’s faith has ceased and mental thought has continued to progress alone, making vast impressive leaps which have caused the new age to forget the original form of a superior being,¹⁵⁶ or the notion of the divine, for only the victorious mind is in sight.¹⁵⁷

There is little clarification in al-Hakim’s text as to how exactly the alleged imbalance occurred or developed. Nevertheless, let us try to understand what might have led al-Hakim to his position. First, it is my belief that he detects an imbalance between the mind and the heart as a direct consequence of the ideological transitions that accompanied the growth of modernity over the past centuries. In general, these transitions precipitated changes in people’s views and attitudes towards life. And in particular, they led to changes in the conceptions of human nature in relation to the question of human existence in the universe and in society. One can also deduce that al-Hakim is referring to the changes that occurred as a result of the development of the scientific revolution as being the origin of the problem as he sees it and the drastic advances in science and technology during the 19th century and, perhaps more importantly, questions raised regarding how religion or human faith is able to withstand modernity. Based on these transitions, I believe al-Hakim’s argument to be, from his reflections and observations,

¹⁵⁵ As clarified, the meaning here indicates overcoming individual or social hindrances and instead, making progress.

¹⁵⁶ By this, he means the existence of a powerful force or the sum of unknown forces opposing the human will.

¹⁵⁷ *Equilibrium*, p.25

that the vast body of new knowledge produced by modern science has effectively rewritten the relationship between human beings and their surroundings: by which he means (a) the status of human beings in the universe and (b) their relationship to others in society.

Before I endeavour to outline al-Hakim's attacks on the changes in attitudes and behaviour in regards of (a) and (b), let us also look at the way in which al-Hakim begins *Equilibrium* in order to have a better grasp of his position. In his opening pages, he is doing several different things. First, he confronts us, the readers, with the questions "What is a human being?" and "What are the characteristics of this thinking creature who wonders about the truth of his nature?" Readers expect to find in the following pages, if not in al-Hakim's doctrine of equilibrium, at least some answers to these questions. He goes on to say that he has observed that there have been changes in past centuries in the way in which people think about their surroundings and their existence. These changes, he adds, are, in his view, a response to the advances in science and technology that have given human beings a new scope and freed them from the limitations of previous eras. Although readers' expectation at this point is to see further explanations for his position from past advances, al-Hakim quickly abandons his mission and writes instead:

You [the reader] may ask me: what is the explanation of the human being from the perspective of literature or art in our present age? The answer to this question will need volumes filled with views, doctrines and positions that have occupied people's thought during the last century. I do not think that this is the topic for our conversation at the moment.¹⁵⁸

In posing this question and diverting the reader from it, al-Hakim, although he would be capable of providing an answer from past views and doctrines,¹⁵⁹ does not in fact do so; rather, he claims, right at the beginning of his book, that his doctrine of equilibrium and his position regarding these particular questions differs from, or even opposes, some of the efforts made by others in previous centuries. By this phrase, I mean the efforts to re-evaluate human existence and to theorise about the meaning of life by such movements as pragmatism, existentialism and secular humanism. It is questionable how successful al-Hakim's approach is in attempting to distance the doctrine of equilibrium from these other doctrines, especially from existentialism. Then, abandoning what he led the readers to believe to be the purpose of his doctrine, he goes on to claim in the same passage that what he will offer instead, over the

¹⁵⁸ *Equilibrium*, p. 17.

¹⁵⁹ See al-Hakim's autobiography, *Sijn al-'Umr*, which outlines his vast readings and his literary reflections.

next few pages, is “an explanation of a human being that is extracted from [his] writings.” He writes:

I will provide a personal view as a starting point to whoever it may concern. What is the general status of the human being in this universe as I have imagined it? This question ought to be divided into two parts that arise in every age: Firstly, is the human being *alone* in this universe and secondly, is the human being *free* in this universe?¹⁶⁰

II.

In the doctrine of equilibrium, al-Hakim holds that the general status of the human being in this universe as he imagines it to be is that the human being suffers from an imbalance in his “spiritual domain”. By this, he means an imbalance between the intellectual domain (the mind) and the emotional domain (the heart). This imbalance generates the ‘crisis of modernity’ where modern man has become accustomed to rationalise and to explain life incidents. As I noted, these domains (the mind and the heart), as described in the doctrine of equilibrium, represent the power of science and the power of religion. Only at the start of the 20th century, al-Hakim claims, has it become apparent that the scientific advances and the progress made over the past centuries, though they have benefited human beings, have also had negative effects on their thinking and attitudes. But why was this imbalance not problematic *prior* to the new age? Two answers can be extracted from al-Hakim’s text. First of all, al-Hakim implies that the way in which people began to think about their status in the universe and their status in society has seen radical change with the changes that came with the founding of modern societies.¹⁶¹ Secondly, and more importantly, he goes on to say in the passage below that *prior* to the new age, religions (or perhaps, religious practices) were able to maintain their position and aspects of strength and act as a counterbalancing force for the force of the human mind with its progress in various fields. And, thus, we deduce from this statement that, with the start of the 20th century, religion or religious practices seemed to al-Hakim to be in decline. It is my belief that, because of this counterbalance of forces (between faith and reason or religion and science), al-Hakim implies that the change, which developed over time in social cultures, happened so slowly that it was barely noticeable *prior* to the 20th century. Given these two answers, it seems that, after all, the argument that al-Hakim seeks to put forward is that the shift in human beings’ attitudes (a. towards their status in the universe and their status in society, and b. of fearing for

¹⁶⁰ See *Equilibrium*, p. 18

¹⁶¹ This reason is of central importance to question (1) and (2) raised at the beginning of this chapter.

their own safety) is one that not only hinders progress¹⁶² (individually and socially), but also, and more importantly from his perspective, has negative effects on human beings' general well-being.¹⁶³ Al-Hakim writes:

The balance that prevailed until the 19th century between the power of the mind and the power of the heart, i.e. between activities of thought and activities of faith, has been disrupted ever since the supremacy of rational scientific achievements and the continuing stagnation of religion... With this imbalance, the new era has swung to the more logical side which has led it to submit to the sole dominance of the mind.¹⁶⁴

The question then becomes, what are the reasons for al-Hakim's pessimism which is reflected in this passage? Is it that materialism, the astonishing scientific and technological advancements, have destroyed any comforting faith in the modern human being's inherent goodness or have stymied healthy outlets for his passions? Yes, al-Hakim seems to be implying, this is indeed the case. In the 1950s, Egypt was undergoing political and economic unrest, and was engaged in conflict with Israel; meanwhile in the West, many European countries were recovering from the aftermath of WWII.¹⁶⁵ Although some scientific/technological discoveries have had a major impact on human beings' lives during the 1950s, such as the invention of a heart-lung machine, with its first use in 1953, al-Hakim is arguing that some human inventions have not had positive implications on human beings' lives, such as the hydrogen bomb or the discovery of other such devastating weapons.¹⁶⁶ The argument that al-Hakim therefore stresses is that past advances in science and technology came with an inevitable development of deadlier weapons, capable of being deployed for political and economic gains. He writes:

As science doubled its strength, renewed its means and widened its horizons, religion, begot by the heart, remained restricted in its horizon and [is] unable to discover new

¹⁶² Al-Hakim's idea of "progress" (meaning in Arabic "Ruqiyy") implies "social progress" which was one of the 19th century social theories. He emphasizes the importance of the power of human beings to make, improve and reshape their society. Progress can be an individual's effort or a result of a collective action which, through continual change, drives one, or society, towards improvement. This modernist idea is expressed more explicitly in al-Hakim's *Thawrat al- Shabab (The Youths' Revolution)*, published in 1983.

¹⁶³ The appeal to one's general well-being is one that is more explicit in some parts of the text than others. He holds that one's understanding of one's being (i.e. the presence of conflicting forces that attempt to engulf one another), and one's status in the universe (i.e. striving towards unattainable goals and in a limited framework against circumstances that are out of one's control), can ease the anxieties of living in a modern society. What he calls "an equilibrist composition" is one who recognises the latter and thus, feels, to a great extent, content.

¹⁶⁴ *Equilibrium*, p.18

¹⁶⁵ That is to say, WWII (1939- 1945) and in the East, the Arab-Israeli War (1948-1949).

¹⁶⁶ Al-Hakim familiarised himself with what he referred to in his autobiography, *Sijn al- 'Umr*, as "the news of the world". He often wrote columns for various national newspapers expressing his views and reflecting on news stories and foreign discoveries that he had come across during his travels to parts of Europe.

springs that [will be] in counterbalance with new phenomena discovered by the human mind.¹⁶⁷

The gloomy image painted by al-Hakim of human beings driven by unrestrained greed and arrogance, starting wars for profit, poisoning the earth in a desperate bid to exploit every possible resource and assembling enough nuclear weapons to destroy the world, is one that reflects the loss of faith in mankind's ability to manage his own destiny.¹⁶⁸ This aspect of al-Hakim's criticism is of central importance to both questions raised in this chapter, and to his overall conception of human beings' living a 'tragic existence' where modern man faces various life struggles that cross, and often alter, his path. The troubling imbalance between the two domains, the mind and the heart, is not only a result of how we, throughout the years, have become accustomed to thinking rationally about all aspects of life and resorting to reason alone for explanation, but also is caused by how we overlook the importance and the force of the heart. Al-Hakim, accordingly, sees that intellectual and emotional developments¹⁶⁹ are not keeping pace with humans' progress and technological advances. And as we are unable to discover other opportunities where we can fulfil our desire for knowledge, the rift between both domains (the mind and the heart) will continue to exist and to widen.

Why would al-Hakim see the shift in behaviour and attitudes as problematic and how is it presented in his doctrine of equilibrium? He gives two reasons. First, he claims that there are situations in life where the mind alone with its logic fails to give an adequate explanation of a specific incident, its implications for one's life, and the reason behind its occurrence. These incidents are those which are beyond human understanding and, in their case, one would need to employ, along with the mind, the heart with its faith and emotions, in order to accept a form of non-rational understanding.¹⁷⁰ Secondly, because he wishes to stay faithful to his doctrine, he claims that the force of the mind ought to be in counterbalance with the force of the heart, i.e. thought and emotion, in order for the human being to retain a "healthy" equilibrist character (i.e. a counterbalanced human composition). To clarify, he wishes to put forward a proposition that every human being should acknowledge that there are two powerful domains which are each an integral part of the human composition.¹⁷¹ In an ideal case, these domains form a

¹⁶⁷ *Equilibrium*, p 18

¹⁶⁸ This is a common view that was shared by many writers and is understandable after WWII.

¹⁶⁹ This is referred to in the text as the "spiritual" domain.

¹⁷⁰ See al-Hakim's passages on the existence of external hidden forces in his *Equilibrium*. He holds that a rational understanding of some incidences is unavailable to us as human beings and thus, a non-rational understanding is needed (i.e. via "faith" or "belief").

¹⁷¹ This is the beginning of a pattern which al-Hakim will follow to discuss opposite forces, or series of dualities, such as: the mind and heart, the power of explanation and expression, evil and good and so on.

counterbalance for one another; the mind counterbalances the heart. This, in al-Hakim's view, was unachievable at the beginning of the new era.¹⁷² His suggestion is, thus, for one to recognise that each of these domains, the mind and the heart, has its own way and method of explanation and, that we should acknowledge and employ them accordingly in different aspects of our lives. But how plausible is this suggestion?

He gives us no further clarification on this matter, but instead he confesses that although, in past centuries, it seems that the mind has indeed succeeded in overpowering the force of the heart,¹⁷³ there are many sceptics like himself who see the heart's domain as one of crucial importance. This view will become clearer in the next passages in his descriptions of how he sees that there is reason for optimism regardless of the dominance of the mind. He goes on to say that it is unfortunate that religions and religious practices have been in decline and are unable to strengthen the heart's domain in order to continue its function as a counterbalance for the domain of the mind. With this in mind, he introduces for the first time in the text the idea that an "equilibrist" person, like himself, has a mission which entails always striving to employ each domain, the mind and the heart *equally*, regardless of succeeding or not in doing so.¹⁷⁴ The important thing is, al-Hakim adds, for one to understand the functions of these two domains (the mind and the heart) as a counterbalance for one another and to know that the nature of their relationship is one of opposition and conflict. This, which according to him is sufficient, aids the equilibrist's mission to continue to strive towards an unattainable goal.¹⁷⁵

In addition, to further understand the interplay between these two domains, the mind and the heart, which exist within every individual, al-Hakim gives an example of a scenario in which he personifies the mind and the heart in order to show their answers to the question of "what is the external force [which affects human being's destiny]?"¹⁷⁶ His aim here is to show that the heart and the mind's answers will differ. He writes:

¹⁷² His reason for believing so is that we have been reliant over the past years on the dominance of rational thinking and thus, there is a rift between rational and non-rational thought, between science and emotion. He writes, "The balance that prevailed until the 19th century between the power of the mind and the power of the heart, i.e. between activities of thought and activities of faith, has been disrupted ever since the supremacy of rational scientific achievements and the continuing stagnation of religion." See *Equilibrium*. p.18

¹⁷³ He claims this to be a "*spiritual imbalance*" (strictly within our emotional and intellectual domains) which affects us in the modern age, and leads to negative consequences (which I outline in section III, p.99).

¹⁷⁴ The idea of striving towards an unattainable goal and the emphasis on human struggle rather than success in achieving the goal is one of the core principles of the equilibrium doctrine.

¹⁷⁵ This is his first attempt to put forward in a subtle manner his conception of a human being "striving" towards a goal, namely balance between the mind and the heart. The emphasis is on the act of "striving" and not the end result of succeeding in employing both domains equally. This is clear in various parts of al-Hakim's text.

¹⁷⁶ I will return to this question to discuss it at length in chapter three section III on the issue of freedom, p. 144.

From the viewpoint of the heart, or faith, the answer [to “what is the external force which affects human being’s destiny?”] is simple. But the mind will always attempt to search for an answer in its material world. The mind will attempt to avoid the field of inner human emotion that cannot be justified by human logic. The mind will say that: The external force is the sum of direct or indirect external conflicting or resisting will in a simple or complex society. The mind can also resort to science to compare magnetic deviation and the deviations of the human will...The mind, therefore, comes up with explanations likely to be accepted by its factual logic for the external forces that affect freedom of human motion. As for the heart, it is persuaded without proof as there is no need for evidence in the world of the heart and faith because faith annuls persuasion. Persuasion itself is not a function of the heart because it comes after doubt, but the heart does not doubt because it does *not* think, it feels.¹⁷⁷

Based on these two answers, al-Hakim argues that a. the widespread of materialism, b. the imbalance between the mind and the heart and c. the change in people’s behaviour and attitudes have contributed to the forming of what he believes to be the “crisis of modernity” which arose at the beginning of a new century. For us to understand what he really means by this “crisis”, we need to also take a closer look at his text. He writes:

As a consequence [of the sole dominance of the mind], human beings (i) define the concept of freedom according to their freedom of thought, and (ii) reject anything that cannot be proven with research and experimentation; hence (iii) deny another will than the human will or the existence of the Other, for he [the human being] becomes the sole being in this universe.¹⁷⁸

These three consequences identified by al-Hakim are his main concerns. They show human beings’ shift in behaviour and attitudes towards (i) their freedom, (ii) their conception of faith versus their use of rational thinking and (iii) their denial of the “other”. This shift, as discussed earlier, is in al-Hakim’s view a direct response to the rapid progress of the human mind in the fields of science and technology, accompanied by the decline in religions and their practices. The question, therefore, becomes why religion, or human faith in general, is unable to form (following from al-Hakim’s logic) a counterbalance for the power of the human mind with its rational thinking and progress at the start of the new age? This should not be taken as a matter of al-Hakim’s speaking of Islam in particular, but rather of his speaking about religions in general. To clarify, there are two ways of understanding al-Hakim’s position. It could be either understood as al-Hakim’s claiming that (a) human faith is not withstanding the force of modernity or (b) that religions are not maintaining their credibility. It is my belief that al-Hakim meant both (a) and (b). The reason for my belief is that there were several political and social

¹⁷⁷ *Equilibrium*, p.22

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid*, p.18

ideological trends in Egypt and the West at the time of Nasser and Sadat's regimes.¹⁷⁹ These ideological trends in Egypt, which had an effect on al-Hakim's position, were: pan-Arabism,¹⁸⁰ the call for the separation of state and religion,¹⁸¹ the rise and fall of the Wafd party,¹⁸² the forming of an Islamic identity,¹⁸³ and the appearance of the Muslim Brotherhood.¹⁸⁴ Events and ideologies in the West were the aftermath of WWII and, generally, the new waves of globalization in Europe. It is worth noting that these ideological trends in Egypt have also led to debates regarding the position of faith and whether religion is capable of keeping pace with the changes of a modern society. Al-Hakim maintains in his doctrine of equilibrium that:

The disruption of balance has had a natural and inevitable consequence, namely anxiety. The widespread occurrence of anxiety in many souls today emanates from the imbalance between the mind and the heart, the intellect and faith. This imbalance *must* repair itself by itself over a period of time.¹⁸⁵ There has been evidence over the years of this repair. The new era has renounced the notion of the human being as a sole creature in this universe. He has started longing for another creature that is superior. Religion, unfortunately, has not offered [the human being] a new framework for this idea that he desperately longs for. He has continued to wait and hope for a miracle to happen but in the realm of rational science that still dominates his thought.¹⁸⁶

In this passage, al-Hakim is claiming various things. First, is his claim that the modern human being suffers from a growing sense of anxiety due to the imbalance between the mind and the heart (science and religion).¹⁸⁷ This anxiety is a characteristic of the modern society. And secondly, he talks of the inadequacy of (institutional) religion, which has not been able to nurture the idea of our search for the Other. Although the latter has been a factor in increasing

¹⁷⁹ See appendix for images of al-Hakim with Presidents Nasser, Sadat and later on, President Mubarak.

¹⁸⁰ In the 1930s-1940s, the dominant mode of expression of Egyptian political activists was Egyptian Nationalism. It was not until the 1950s, that Egypt began to be interested in pan-Arabism. By the late 1980s, pan-Arabism began to be eclipsed by both nationalist and Islamist ideologies. And, in the 1990s, many people voiced their opposition to pan-Arabism. See Rashid Khalidi, e.d. *The Origins of Arab Nationalism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1990, (section on James Jankowski "Egypt and Early Arab Nationalism" pp. 244–45).

¹⁸¹ In 1925, Ali 'Abdel-Raziq published his book *Islam and the Foundations of Governance* and in 1947, his book *Consensus in Islamic Law (al-Ijma' Fi Ash-Shari'ah al-Islamiyyah)*, where he argued against a role for religion in politics or the political prescriptive value of religious texts. See Adams, Charles C. *Islam and Modernism in Egypt*. Russell & Russell, New York, 1968 (2nd Edition). pp. 259-68

¹⁸² Raymond Hinnebusch, "The Re-emergence of the Wafd Party: Glimpses of the Liberal opposition in Egypt," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 16.1, March 1984, p. 101

¹⁸³ This is in relation to the 1952 Egyptian revolution, tension and hostility towards Israel and economic losses for the country.

¹⁸⁴ They made their first appearance in 1928 and since then have played a role in politics and policy making.

¹⁸⁵ This is the moral imperative.

¹⁸⁶ See *Equilibrium*, p.18

¹⁸⁷ Al-Hakim says that, from the perspective of modern science, it is difficult to separate what is material from that which is spiritual. And what is even more difficult is to find a specific definition for "spiritual". In a huge part of the text he uses a distinction between the two domains, the mind and the heart. By "science", he clarifies that he means the "realm of rational thinking", and also in some parts of the text, he implies by "science" the discoveries and humans' achievements in the field, whereas by "religion", he refers to human faith and its representation. The idea of "institutional" religion is avoided.

our sense of anxiety at the start of the new century, he sees one reason which calls for optimism, namely our longing for a superior creature. From this we understand that al-Hakim believes that the hope in coping with the crisis of modernity resides in our attempt to make sense of our existence in the universe and, most importantly, resides in our search for the Other.¹⁸⁸ He writes:

The interest today in flying saucers and people's hope that others are coming with a message from a better world and superior creatures, are nothing but a general breeze to cool the feeling that dried out with the parched spring of religion, to relieve human beings of anxiety and to rescue them a little from their isolation in this universe.¹⁸⁹

And also, he writes in a different paragraph:

Animals' realisation of stronger beings is what leads them to discover the source of their own power, its development, and to prepare for the moment of confrontation and encounter. If we assumed that an animal lived alone on a desert island, felt secure in it, did not feel any other power other than its own, and did not feel the need to use or compare it to another, there would have been the potential for such a power to wither and disappear. For animals, the feeling of the presence of a stronger being stimulates power, just as the feeling of the presence of the superior, for human beings, stimulates transcendence.¹⁹⁰

The search for evidence in order to shed light on the nature of one's existence, or the existence of the will of a superior being, is al-Hakim's reason for holding that with adequate time, we will be able to restore our faith in the existence of "others" away from the dominance of the mind and rational thinking. This claim is, however, misleading on al-Hakim's part. This is because he is not making a claim that we humans will indeed be able to restore our faith in another will other than our own (he doesn't really care about that), as much as it is a claim to emphasize the importance and necessity of continuing our search and our act of "striving" to unravel that which is unknown to us (i.e. with the merits of science and with the awareness of our limitations and of our knowledge and, accordingly, the necessity of "belief"). The conception of striving to unravel the unknown is an important recurrent theme in many of al-Hakim's narratives where protagonists either strive to fulfil a need or to reach a goal whilst fully aware of their inevitable defeat against forces that are outside of their control.¹⁹¹ Another plausible argument al-Hakim proposes in *Equilibrium* is that, although there is no concrete

¹⁸⁸ I.e. Outside institutional religion

¹⁸⁹ *Equilibrium*, p. 19

¹⁹⁰ "Transcendence", away from the common religious or spiritual meaning, in this context implies the need for self-improvement and rising above the present condition by finding a purpose and meaning to one's existence. For al-Hakim, transcendence is an act of self-fulfilment of one's being.

¹⁹¹ I engage with this idea further in chapter two (section ii, p.118) on al-Hakim's dualities and I present examples from his narratives in support of my claim.

evidence of the existence of another will in our immediate experiences, "belief" alone in another will's existence (or belief in the existence of a better world) can help us to make sense of our own existence and to improve our general state of well-being (i.e. relieves the sense of isolation and anxiety).¹⁹² Although this may be an optimistic and naïve view, it is a coherent proposition put forward by al-Hakim in the context of his doctrine of equilibrium.¹⁹³

Moreover, a further argument advanced by al-Hakim is that there is another reason for human beings to worry, which is their fear for their own physical destruction at their own hands. He clarifies this idea:

Man has developed tremendous and devastating material capabilities that could at any moment escape his control and become his own destruction. These capabilities are only reined in by his wisdom, but as he *cannot* guarantee this wisdom, he grows anxious for his safety and existence. Man lives day by day in this new era looking at the scale of equilibrium between power and wisdom with wondering restless eyes. [And thus] a human being's predicament in this era is in my opinion a result of the disruption of his equilibrist composition.¹⁹⁴

As discussed earlier, this passage supports al-Hakim's belief that there have been devastating consequences as a result of the progress made in different fields of science and technology for the sake of increasing material gain. Anxiety is one of many side-effects that we suffer from in a modern society. As we grow more anxious every day, the fear for our own safety grows accordingly. This disruption of our equilibrist composition by which al-Hakim means a disruption of the relationship between forces within every individual as one has a tendency to swing towards one side more than another, is in his view inevitable. What matters to him, therefore, is how we can find ways to cope with the new era's predicament regardless of the end result of our efforts and struggles (because one's act of striving is more important in his view than reaching a goal or succeeding). With this said, the question becomes the following: what is this predicament or "crisis of modernity" as presented in *Equilibrium*? And what is he proposing that we do?

III.

In his doctrine of equilibrium, al-Hakim identifies "the crisis of modernity" as one which affects us, modern human beings, in many ways: (i) we suffer from a growing sense of anxiety,

¹⁹² See *Equilibrium*, p.19 and discussion on pp.97-98 where al-Hakim considers one's longing for a superior "other" as a sign of the need for/ or the restoration of 'faith'.

¹⁹³ It is important here to keep in mind that his purpose of writing is not to instruct as much as it is to make the readers think, as al-Hakim expresses at the beginning of his text.

¹⁹⁴ *Equilibrium*, p. 19

(ii) we have developed a fear of our own self-destruction, (iii) we deny another will or the existence of the “other”, and, most importantly (iv) we believe in a false sense of freedom. I ought to explain the latter two problems (iii) and (iv) since I have previously discussed the earlier two and showed how they appear in al-Hakim’s doctrine of equilibrium. First, al-Hakim addresses issue (iii) by arguing that the modern human being has *denied* the existence of another will on the basis that the human mind is unable to accept and conceive of anything other than a human being’s own existence. There are two claims here made by al-Hakim. On the one hand, al-Hakim is claiming that the mind is incapable of constructing an image of a superior being and, on the other hand, he is claiming that the human being is the one who is responsible for denying the existence of another being. The latter is more explicit in the following passage:

In his pride, man can no longer see anything other than his absolute freedom. He no longer sees the others’ unseen powers that move his existence, manipulates his destiny, *requires his struggle* and calls for his thinking. Man has *assumed*, on the basis of this image, a theatrical costume of his fate and freedom, both with no limits, and has put a divine halo above his head, which shines deceptively. Regardless of the sincerity of his motives and the importance of his goals, there are consequences that threaten the truth of his insight.¹⁹⁵

We, accordingly, have made two assumptions: one, of our superiority in this universe and another, of our absolute freedom. Both beliefs, from al-Hakim’s perspective, are false for reasons that I will explain further. It is worth noting first that al-Hakim came to this conclusion from readings, observations and experiences during his frequent travels to the West.¹⁹⁶ This is confirmed by his references to European critics and contemporary European literature.¹⁹⁷ In the latter case, he explicitly states that “had contemporary European literature shifted its direction in such a way as to call for the summoning of human power against the hidden obstacles that restrict [human beings’] freedom, there would have been in such thought some solutions for the crisis of humanity.”¹⁹⁸ So why are these beliefs (that of our superiority in this universe and our absolute freedom) considered false and problematic from al-Hakim’s perspective? First, in the doctrine of equilibrium, al-Hakim argues that (i) there are “hidden forces” that affect, directly or indirectly, human beings’ destiny. This bold claim is neither supported in al-Hakim’s text by examples nor is it explained further against doubts or

¹⁹⁵ Ibid, p.24

¹⁹⁶ Al-Hakim writes in *Zahrat al-‘Umr* that, besides his visits to France, he visited parts of Europe and carried on writing during his trips. He specifically spoke of a regular skiing trip that he used to make in the company of close friends. During these trips, he admits, he found his inspiration.

¹⁹⁷ See his passage on contemporary European literature in his *Equilibrium*, p. 24

¹⁹⁸ Ibid

criticisms. He simply refers to the occurrence of unexplained incidences that change the course of human beings' lives as proof of his belief in the existence of "hidden forces". This belief is one of the reasons which led him to form a conception of human beings' *tragic existence* (as influenced by the Greek tragedies where one's life story unfolds towards one's destiny). I would like to argue that al-Hakim deliberately did not clarify his claim (i) or support it with examples, in order that he might encourage the readers to "think" about the issue without any social or religious preconceptions.¹⁹⁹ By doing so, he did not limit the readers' understanding of these "hidden forces" by giving too many details of what exactly they are or what they mean since he is also unaware of their nature.²⁰⁰ We come to conclude that these hidden forces can be age, death, divine interventions or even, as some may wish to believe, sheer unexplainable coincidences. Once again, the "belief" alone in these forces is, in his view, considered to be of vital importance to all human beings' well-being and character.

The second important argument that al-Hakim puts forward is that (ii) human beings have an "extent of freedom" and not absolute freedom (which I will clarify further in chapter three, section III). He writes that the notion of "the chaining of freedom" is one that "does *not* appeal to the majority of Europeans today because they have given too much credence to the mind, to science and to thought which only *deifies* the human being in this universe."²⁰¹ But how did he come to this conclusion? It is my belief that he formed this opinion either from reading directly the comments he was accustomed to receive from critics or, alternatively, from his readings of articles published in foreign journals and newspapers about his published translated works in some foreign languages, and particularly in French. He writes that a number of foreign critics envisaged his answers to the two questions: Is the human being *alone* in this universe? And is he *free* in this universe? In critics' commentaries and research on al-Hakim's twenty plays that have been translated,²⁰² it is mentioned that:

The dominating philosophy in [al-Hakim's] plays is that human beings have limited capabilities before their destiny, and that human fate, in my opinion, is always linked to man's struggle against invisible forces. Some critics stressed this by claiming that, for me, beliefs have been liberated from their sacredness and become more mundane,

¹⁹⁹ He was receiving at the time a few letters of disapproval addressed to himself and his editor, from his readers and critics, objecting to the contents and direction of his writings. It became clear gradually that making his views public began to create a negative stir assigned to his name and raise speculations and controversies.

²⁰⁰ In my view, his experimentations with the concept of "hidden forces" is most apparent in his dramatic works. See p.116 on dualities.

²⁰¹ This is a criticism of European ideas regarding human freedom, and, to some extent, a criticism of J. P Sartre's conception of freedom (chapter three, section III) p. 144.

²⁰² A few plays were translated into French by al-Hakim himself.

but the human being has continued to be anxious and threatened by hidden forces. Whatever the case, it can be understood from what these critics wrote that they have concluded from my theatre that I support neither the notion of man's solitude in this universe nor the idea that man possesses absolute freedom. And this indeed I do *not* deny.²⁰³

What then is al-Hakim's position on these particular issues regarding one's status in the universe and regarding the notion of absolute freedom as core questions raised in his text? He first explicitly claims that his position is an outcome of mixed readings from Eastern and Western traditions, his own writings and what he has developed over the years to become his doctrine of equilibrium. This is because he holds that "the literary author or artist will *not* be able to define the position of the human being in his time, world and society or age if the relationship between literature and the arts is disconnected from the science and ideas that surround him."²⁰⁴ On this basis, regarding the status of the human being in the universe, he goes on to say that we can extract an immediate answer to the question of "what is the status of the human being in the universe?" from reflections made on past advances and progress of the last few centuries. This answer, as I previously mentioned, based on the rapid progress of the human mind, is that the human being came to believe that "[he] *is* alone in the universe without a competitor; he is the God of this existence with ultimate freedom."²⁰⁵ He adds, in the same passage, "with this answer religious teachings were demolished and the new age labelled itself with the seal of materialism".²⁰⁶ It is al-Hakim's belief, therefore, that these two positions, assumed by us, human beings, (that of (i) our superiority in the universe and (ii) our absolute freedom) were formed on the basis that we have not found in our immediate experiences evidence of the existence of a superior being. Al-Hakim considers this to be a flaw on our part. He makes clear that, although there is "evidence of a powerful mental strength and a superior spirit a million times stronger than [our] own mind and spirit"²⁰⁷ which exists all around us in this universe, the mind (although it acknowledges the notion of superiority) is "incapable of creating a *convincing* and clear image that matches [the superior being's] grandeur."²⁰⁸ We, the

²⁰³ *Equilibrium*, p. 20

²⁰⁴ *Ibid*

²⁰⁵ *Ibid*, p. 18

²⁰⁶ He wishes to show that in what he considers to be "the material world", religious teachings and the concept of faith and spirituality have declined. Materialists, for him, believe that the world is made up of a single substance, matter, the motions and properties of which could be used to explain all phenomena. This view contrasts with his belief that there are unexplainable phenomena that are beyond human reach and understanding.

²⁰⁷ Although he does not say what he think this evidence is, it is not implausible that his claim is formed on the basis of his Islamic beliefs and upbringing, and thus, refers to the process of creation. I think so because of how al-Hakim in other parts of the text made observations in regards of the creation of the bees and the birds. See *Equilibrium*, p. 21.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid*, p. 45

readers, are not given any further explanation in support of his argument for the existence of a superior being; instead, he resorts to identifying the limitations of the human mind and the benefits, in regards of human beings' general well-being, of having "belief" in this idea.²⁰⁹ Al-Hakim writes:

This is because the mind can only create images that suit its logic, which are based on assumptions and observations that fall within its experiences. The mind will, thus, only create a familiar image of the superior; an image that is exceedingly personified based on the mind's prior knowledge and perspective. And this will only produce a distorted image that devalues the idea, which is perhaps one of the reasons for atheism. We ask of the mind to create an image of God but it fails. Instead of laughing and mocking the mind, we laugh and mock the idea of a God.²¹⁰

Before examining the question of absolute freedom and showing al-Hakim's position as presented in his doctrine of equilibrium, it is worth first going back to al-Hakim's conception of human beings' "tragic existence" and explaining it since it is of crucial importance to understanding al-Hakim's overall philosophy. He argues, based on a comparison between human beings and other creatures, that human beings are not bound by an innate knowledge which binds all other animals. For example, on the one hand, the birds and the bees, from observations, "do not learn or train but are born with a deep-seated innate knowledge called 'instinct' which drives them to create",²¹¹ but on the other hand, the human being is born unbound, free to uncover knowledge. This is al-Hakim's declaration that the human being is indeed born free. He quickly adds, however, that this freedom is not absolute as it may initially seem or as many misunderstand it to be. Al-Hakim builds upon his preliminary declaration by saying that with human freedom come responsibility. The human being is created free, but "his work is conditioned and his direction is determined by the circumstances that tie him to life."²¹² These circumstances "do not obliterate the human free will in its many forms".²¹³ This means that, although they interfere with human freedom in different ways, the human being still possesses "some degree of free will". What is important for al-Hakim is his conviction that with this freedom come a sense of responsibility, namely a responsibility towards oneself, towards others and towards society as a whole. In this passage, al-Hakim gives an analogy in order to clarify further his position:

²⁰⁹ This is not al-Hakim's way of stressing the "man of faith" rather than the "man of will". He simply identifies that the state of alienation which affects modern man is caused by the chasm between the two.

²¹⁰ *Equilibrium*, p.21

²¹¹ *Ibid*

²¹² *Ibid*

²¹³ *Ibid*

Perhaps, the mind would agree with science, which is one of its sources and tools, that the human being is restricted based on the freedom of movement in relation to matter. Newton, and Galileo before him,²¹⁴ said that a moving body remains in motion in its course unless an external force intervenes. This is the famous law of self-limitation of matter, which can also apply to human freedom, meaning that human freedom remains in motion in its course unless an external force intervenes. And here we should ask the mind or science this complex question: What is this external force?²¹⁵

The restriction placed on human freedom from the day the human being is born (whether in the form of interference from another will or from an external force) is what al-Hakim shows as a state of “tragic existence”. Our freedom is not absolute because “an external force or the sum of direct or indirect conflicting forces or resisting wills” (by which he also means other human beings in society) can, at any moment, influence one’s choices or affect one’s freedom in one way or the other. If we look closely at al-Hakim’s overarching theme in his narratives (in addition to the claims made in his doctrine of equilibrium) in order to answer the question “What is this external force?”, we come to the conclusion, as I previously implied, that his understanding of external forces *varies* from one work to another. Al-Hakim saw the human being as primarily defeated by external forces that are beyond human understanding and human capabilities. To give a brief example, in his play *Ahl al-Kahf*, the external forces affecting the characters’ destiny were time and age. In his adaptation of *King Oedipus*, the external force that affected protagonist’s destiny was knowledge of the truth and, in his play *Shahrazad*, the characters’ destiny was affected by the force of faith and emotion versus the force of absolute thought. Al-Hakim writes in support of his position:

The human heart sometimes feels an emotion that cannot be explained; it is neither alone nor free in this universe. Do you not sometimes feel that someone somewhere is staring at you? And if you raised your head and searched, you would indeed find that your emotion was true. Have you ever noticed once or twice in your life that a particular incident happened to you on a certain occasion that changed the course of your life in a certain way? You attempt to link it to a coincidence, but you fail because an external will has intervened in an orderly manner emanating from an awareness that is conscious of what it does and knows what it wants, in order to provoke specific results that would not have happened were it not for this unexpected external intervention. An external will that has all the elements of a sage and intelligent will which descends on your ordinary will and changes its direction and paints for it a new path. Sometimes your mind, regardless of the stability and precision of logic it may achieve, refuses to submit such incidents to the usual and simple logical explanation. Advocates of the mind and science can only nod their heads in such instances: and, as for the stubborn and fanatical, they cling to their reasoning because, in their view, the mind alone is God.²¹⁶

²¹⁴ His remarks show the breadth of his knowledge.

²¹⁵ *Equilibrium*, p.22

²¹⁶ Ibid.

IV.

Given the above examination of some of the core issues raised in al-Hakim's *Equilibrium* and the questions concerning his positions, it seems that one must take into consideration the varied influences and philosophical positions that affected al-Hakim before making any judgement on his work (and his career as a writer and a philosopher). To conclude, as the work currently stands, it is a successful attempt if and only if it is seen as a product of al-Hakim's philosophical experimentations and as one which offers us a distinct and particular approach to life in order to cope with some of the problems that exist in a modern society. With this in mind, and given the above discussions, I conclude the following:

- (i) The doctrine of equilibrium is a product of al-Hakim's observations and experiences (as a result of living in the East and the West) which were only brought together, or compiled in his book *Equilibrium* and published in 1955, in order to give himself the opportunity to reflect, in a literary and philosophical manner, on issues that he sees us facing us in the 20th century, i.e. in modern societies.
- (ii) *Equilibrium* presents to us the consequences of an imbalance between the two domains (mind/science or heart/faith) that has gradually developed throughout the past centuries and became most apparent as a "crisis" at the start of the 20th century. The imbalance is a result of a shift in our attitudes and behaviour whereby, in our modern era, we have come to believe in (a) our superiority in this universe and in (b) our absolute freedom.
- (iii) Both beliefs (a) and (b), from al-Hakim's perspective, are false and problematic for reasons that I have outlined.²¹⁷ He argues that the sum of wills or "external forces" have the power and ability to restrict or change the course of human freedom. And on such a basis he concludes that human beings possess freedom to a limited extent and not absolute freedom. This limited freedom is within a specific framework which is affected by the existence of other wills in society (i.e. other people) and the existence of various external forces (which are beyond human understanding and control). He refers to our state of existence as "tragic" as influenced by Greek tragedies (which is an underlying idea in his narratives as it is also an idea that has been explicitly presented in his doctrine of equilibrium; namely that we live a

²¹⁷ Although he was unable to support his claim (regarding the existence of "other wills" in the universe) or provide adequate evidence for believing so solely through his text, it is worth noting that his experimentations with this idea are better articulated in his dramatic narratives. I assume the latter on the basis that all of the scholarly works on al-Hakim to date mainly discuss his dramatic works. I intend to engage with this in the next chapters.

tragedy which unfolds accordingly and leads us to our destiny. All we can do in this tragedy is to exert effort in overcoming the struggles in our paths in order to fulfil our beings/ existence).

- (iv) And finally, for the sake of one's social, intellectual and emotional progress and development, al-Hakim seems to imply that it is more advisable to have "belief" than to not have one at all. The realisation of a "super being" (or belief in the superior's existence) is, accordingly, considered to be a "human necessity".

From these conclusions, it is evident that the doctrine of equilibrium encourages us to consider life to be a series of inevitable struggles that require us to channel all our efforts into productive methods, not to achieve a specific goal (though that might be one's initial motivation), but to overcome our individual and social problems. The means by which we can do so is for us to know how to improve and develop ourselves (intellectually and emotionally) and our society in its social, political and economic aspects. And only in so doing, will we come to realise the importance and necessity of our struggles (striving against that which is unknown) and, at the same time, to accept, accordingly, the nature of our tragic existence.

CHAPTER TWO

SPIRITUAL IMBALANCE

*“The human being’s predicament in this era is, in my opinion, a result of the disruption of his equilibrium composition”*²¹⁸

In the previous chapter, I introduced and examined some of the core issues in al-Hakim’s equilibrium doctrine, specifically those regarding the question of our status in the universe and in society. These two questions were presented by al-Hakim at the beginning of his text, *Equilibrium* (1955). From my examination of the content of this text, I concluded that the equilibrium doctrine offers us an approach towards life in which, if we adopt it, we are able to:

- (i) Cope with modernity
- (ii) Transcend our existence individually and socially and;
- (iii) Come to realise and accept that regardless of the tragic nature of our existence, we have a certain extent of freedom and that there are sources of strengths within us.²¹⁹

To clarify the last of these, al-Hakim sees human existence as “tragic” in nature as a result of the influence of variants of existentialism which presents life as a struggle. Albert Camus’s philosophy of the absurd comes to mind. His presentation of struggle in *The Myth of Sisyphus* is similar to the one presented by some of al-Hakim’s protagonists who experience the absurdity of life and yet continue to struggle regardless of the futility of the tasks in order to find some meaning in, and purpose for, existence.²²⁰ This idea is evident in al-Hakim’s play *Ya Tali’ al-Shajarah (The Tree Climber)* published in 1962.²²¹ This was a new genre introduced for the first time to the Egyptian theatre using Camus’ idea of the absurd and Samuel Becket’s style of writing in his play *Waiting for Godot*.²²² As a result of the play’s production, he was referred to, in Egypt, as “the father of the theatre of the absurd”. It is questionable whether al-Hakim considered this play in particular a success or not as he did not write more plays in this style. Regardless, it was a fair attempt at experimenting with a new genre and an existentialist

²¹⁸ *Equilibrium*, p. 19

²¹⁹ This lends itself to al-Hakim’s belief in the notion of reaction and compensation in which within every individual there is a source of power or a force which compensates for any shortage or weakness.

²²⁰ It is not implausible that al-Hakim read *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* (1942) in French.

²²¹ This play was al-Hakim’s first play to be translated into English by Denys Johnson Davies who published it through Oxford University Press. *The Economist* published on the 1st of January 1967 that a trend of Egyptian authors were following Camus’ theatre of the absurd in Egypt.

²²² The similarity between al-Hakim’s *Ya Tali’ al-Shajarah* and Becket’s *Waiting for Godot* is one that was discussed in the works of literary criticism by Egyptian and foreign critics. See Hutchins *The Reader’s Guide*.

idea. His view in his *Equilibrium*, in which he says that the barriers or hindrances in one's life give one enough reason, not for defeat and despair, but for exerting more effort to reach a specific goal, regardless of the outcome of the struggle, is one that echoes Camus' statement in his play: "The struggle itself towards the heights is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy."²²³

The multiple influences on al-Hakim, whether from his readings and admiration for Greek literature or from dialogues with other thinkers, make it difficult to pinpoint his ideas to a specific source that may have inspired him the most.²²⁴ Nevertheless, a recurrent theme in his writings is how he sees that our ultimate struggle is in finding meaning and purpose to our lives regardless of any obstacles in our paths. It is important to note that the exact nature of these obstacles is one that is left obscure in his *Equilibrium*. This is to allow for a wider scope of understanding or, perhaps, to leave room for readers' interpretation. By this, I also mean that al-Hakim manifested in his dramatic works and philosophical narratives examples which suggest that these obstacles or hindrances can possibly be the wills of others (i.e. antagonists) or, as he explicitly claimed in his text, they can be the sum of direct or indirect hidden unknown forces (i.e. time, death, knowledge or age). The emphasis as I understand it to be rests on the importance of our struggles in life. Struggle, in his view, is not only inevitable, but also a human necessity.²²⁵

The second idea is one where al-Hakim holds that, within every individual, there are sources of strengths that act as coping mechanisms or forces corresponding to weaknesses or shortages. Although this is a reason for optimism, he criticises how we upon approaching modernity (i.e. the 20th century) have shown how we often fall into despair and lament our position rather than look for the whereabouts of these forces, find them and, more importantly, use them to overcome or to compensate for a predicament. To clarify, our predicament is falling victim to "spiritual imbalance".²²⁶ At the first incidence, the nature of this imbalance is left

²²³ Camus, Albert. *The Myth of Sisyphus*.

²²⁴ An influence on al-Hakim is Ahmad Lutfi al-Sayyid (1873-1963) who was a close friend of his father and the one who advised al-Hakim's father to send the young al-Hakim to France to complete his education. Al-Sayyid was a scholar who translated a substantial amount of work on Aristotle and worked as a rector of Cairo University. In founding *al-Garida* newspaper, al-Sayyid nurtured the young talents of modernist writers like al-Hakim and continued to be an influential figure in Egyptian politics and literature. It is, therefore, my speculation that al-Hakim had read or come across Eastern and Western theories addressing the issue of equilibrium whether during his studies at Cairo University or upon recommendation from al-Sayyid (or others) whom he admired.

²²⁵ This is because only through struggle, can we improve ourselves and our society, make progress and fulfil our existence. This idea is clearer in the context of his dramatic work where a protagonist fails or is defeated at the end of a story or a play but nevertheless, his struggle is emphasized by al-Hakim as one that was worthwhile.

²²⁶ He began his work by questioning if it is possible to give a definition of a human being from the perspective

obscure in the text, but gradually, he clarifies, and explains it as our inability to avoid falling victim to the sole use of rational thinking or the sole use of emotions. This is a fault on our part in previous years because we have not been able to maintain a balance between the intellect and emotion.²²⁷ This conclusion is of vital importance to this chapter for reasons that will become gradually apparent. With this in mind, I will commence by identifying the underlying theories in al-Hakim's text.²²⁸ Some may not see them as philosophical per se; nevertheless they are vital to the understanding of the doctrine of equilibrium as a whole. These theories are: (a) the models of polarity which al-Hakim uses freely to describe the relationship between any two forces (as will become evident through my analysis); and (b) a series of dualities that present themselves accordingly throughout his text. The latter, in my view, are presented more clearly in al-Hakim's dramatic narratives than in his *Equilibrium*.²²⁹ Let us first look at how both (a) the models of polarity and (b) al-Hakim's dualities, are discussed in his text and, more importantly, how they develop to form his doctrine of equilibrium which underlies his works (i.e. those written between the early 1950s and late 1960s).

One should not, first of all, overlook the fact that the common understanding of the doctrine of equilibrium does not lay stress on the importance of "reaction and compensation" as a phenomenon that al-Hakim both asserts and maintains. In fact, in *al-Muwsu'ah al-Mu'asyra fi-al Fikr al-Falsafi wa il-ijtima'i* (*The encyclopaedia of contemporary philosophical and social thought*) the given definition of equilibrium (often translated as "equivalency" which is the meaning that al-Hakim rejects) is "a philosophical theory that maintains that there

of different fields such as the arts, literature or science. The definition that he reached from his enquiry, and the one that he personally agreed with, was that a human being is a balanced creature physically and *spiritually*. This is based on his belief that equilibrium is human beings' natural state. We are balanced physically because our bodily organs function in an orderly manner. Bodily organs are naturally able to restore or compensate for one another in case of any shortages or weaknesses they may experience. The problem that al-Hakim faced was in his claim that humans are likewise "spiritually" balanced. This is problematic because he would be claiming that the power of the mind is in balance with the power of the heart, something that he was sceptical of and doubted on many levels during this period, and began to investigate it.

²²⁷ This is left obscure to start with. He clarifies later on in the text that modern person is unable to avoid falling victim to either rational thinking or to using one emotions, rather than maintaining a balance between both domains.

²²⁸ This function as a continuation of al-Hakim's doctrine outlined in the previous chapter. Note that he has intentionally or unintentionally adapted, developed, polished and presented a theory of equilibrium that has been present primarily in Islamic medieval philosophy and in Greek (i.e. Aristotle and Heraclitus) and somehow in European philosophies (i.e. Newton's third law; although his theory begins in some sense as Newton's, it diverges from it). Also note that via his Egyptian education, he became familiar with Newton's theories (which were available in Arabic), the works of al-Kindi and French naturalist, Jean Baptise Robinet (1835-1820). See Hutchins, *A Reader's Guide*, footnote no 22, p.220.

²²⁹ This is possibly because he enjoyed the style of literary and philosophical experimentation where he is free to challenge ideas through fictional characters. After every discussion of a specific duality, I will give examples from his text in support of my claims.

is a group of powers in life that *converge and balance*, making ‘equilibrium’ an essential and a basic purpose. Life is like two scales that have to be always balanced; otherwise, life loses its positivity.”²³⁰ This definition is not the same as the one maintained by al-Hakim because the use of the words “converge and balance” suggests a “joining or meeting” of forces, perhaps also on an *equal* level. In al-Hakim’s definition, however, forces exist as separate entities forming a *counterbalance* for one another and attempting to maintain continuous opposition. The act of opposing one another in the form of “resistance” ensures that both entities’ existence is “dependent” on one another. Al-Hakim writes:

True One= Zero. Positive life begins with “two” because relationship only takes place when two things exist: namely, movement and life. Every motion must be met by opposition and a resisting motion. Every force has its opposing *counter-balancing* force...The one on its own is a *negative* presence; it is a step from nothingness. It is, in terms of positive movement, null. Because it neither resists another, nor is there another force that resists it. With lack of resistance, motion ceases.²³¹

From this passage, one extracts that the forces described by al-Hakim act (in relation to one another) as a “counterbalance”. This is, in his view, a natural way of ensuring that the process of reaction and compensation always occurs. In the first scenario, for example, if one force emerges, another force will emerge as well, at the same time, in order to form a counterbalance, and in doing so, equilibrium will be maintained. In the second scenario, if a force becomes weak or suffers from a specific shortage, another force will quickly emerge in order to “compensate” for this weakness or shortage and, once again, equilibrium will be maintained. These scenarios are two of the main frameworks from which al-Hakim begins to form his own doctrine. With this in mind, the relationship between forces, as described in *Equilibrium*, reveals to us three models of polarity. These are (i) dependency, (ii) resistance and counterbalance (i.e. an act of “reaction and compensation”), and (iii) engulfment. All three are believed, by al-Hakim, to be natural processes which define the relationships between forces. It is perhaps worth noting here that the three models of polarity are not explicitly identified by al-Hakim in the text; rather, they are presented in an allegorical and ambiguous alternating manner. In describing these relationships, as will become apparent from the following sections, al-Hakim shows that these models of polarity are not only inevitable, but also occur in a natural way, whether within our human composition or in the universe. What this process simply requires in order for a state of equilibrium to be restored, is time.

²³⁰ K. al Hag, *al-Muwsu’ah al-Mu’asyra fi-al Fikr al-Falsafi wa il-ijtima’i*, Beirut, Maktabat Lebanon, 2000, p.153.

²³¹ *Equilibrium*, p. 51

I. DEPENDENCY

“There has to be an “other” for you to “be”. Equilibrium, then, is established on “otherness”. Without the “other” there is no existence.”²³²

First of all, al-Hakim applies a general notion of ontological dependency to all creatures in the universe. Is it possible that he sees it as a way of describing not only human relationships, but also a way of describing relationships between forces in our universe and the forces that exist within our composition? This seems to be the case. He argues that one force or entity must rely on the other to exist. If one force grows to be more powerful than the other and attempts to swallow or engulf the other force, the stronger force behaves in an imbalanced manner, leading to various consequences.²³³ It is important to understand that equilibrium’s role is, therefore, to ensure that ‘action and reaction’ forces continue to exist alongside and in opposition to one another. Based on this logic, al-Hakim’s equilibrium does not suppose the existence of two corresponding forces or powers from the beginning to the end of their relationship. Instead, it acknowledges the *dynamic* nature of the relationship and the presence of two *parallel* forces that rely entirely in their existence on one another in order to drive themselves forward from instability, or imbalance, i.e. towards a state of equilibrium.

Resistance and Counterbalance: An act of “reaction and compensation”

Every action has its own reaction and this reaction is nothing but an attempt to *restore* a balance to an action that may have been exaggerated, disturbed or has exceeded its limitation. The true meaning of reaction is the *re-balancing* of an action that has *veered* to an extreme.²³⁴

Secondly, the relationship between (A) and (\sim A) is said to be one of “resistance”. Both should *ideally* be balanced as it is their natural state. However, there are numerous factors which lead to their imbalance. (A) is a *counterbalancing* force for (\sim A). If there is a shortage or a weakness in (A), because both react and compensate one another, this shortage or weakness will be restored by (\sim A). Al-Hakim gives in the below passage examples of weakness or shortage (i.e. from nature) that has been “compensated for” by counterbalancing features of strength present in another force. He writes:

The bee has delicate wings, yet it has a sharp needle. Also, a person who is heavy in

²³² Ibid, p. 48

²³³ Note that these consequences are considered to be temporary.

²³⁴ Ibid, p. 30

weight and body mass often has a light sense of humour and spirit, while the one who lacks facial or bodily beauty is often rich in the beauty of the soul, mind or other qualities. Thus, equilibrium must take place in any possible form because, as we said, every action has a reaction and every shortage must be met by an increase to counterbalance it. Evil and weakness, shortage and ugliness are all characteristics in creatures that cannot exist without their counterbalances. The problem is that the conscious creature, the human being, is the only creature who often ignores this truth; if exposed to one of the latter cases, he falls into despair and cannot discover the counterbalancing forces that exist within him without his knowledge. At the same time an instinctive creature, an animal or a plant, will not despair or become static, but rather it will realise, with instinctive knowledge, where to find the balancing force.²³⁵

We can gather from this passage some fundamental factors about his notion of reaction and compensation in relation to human beings and other creatures. He argues, first, based on observations and enquiries that all creatures have the ability to recognise the multiple sources of strengths that exist within in order to recover from any weakness or shortage.²³⁶ This is true if we assume that in all creatures there are indeed parallel forces that are capable of counterbalancing one another.²³⁷ With this said, the issue that al-Hakim finds problematic is how we, humans, are the only creatures that are ignorant of where our forces of strength reside. Our inability to discover the means by which we can overcome any predicament is one that he says hinders our progress.²³⁸ But why is this so? A possible explanation is al-Hakim's pessimism regarding the progress made in various fields by the new Egyptian generation who seem to overlook their past or even reject it entirely.²³⁹ Gradually, his criticisms developed into a more positive approach in his doctrine of equilibrium whereby he calls for (a) our understanding of ideas concerning our position in life (as a "tragic" existence that requires our struggle to transcend it), and (b) a recognition that just as we are the most capable of our own destruction, we are also capable of overcoming our own predicaments. The latter seems to have been a common view which dominated the intellectual arena at the time, especially after

²³⁵ Ibid, pp. 30-31

²³⁶ Although he mentions "all" creatures, in some parts of the text, he makes a comparison between animals who are capable of doing so (i.e. realising the sources of strength within them) and human beings as creatures who fail to recognise the forces of strength in order to compensate or overcome their weaknesses and thus fall into despair and become unable to overcome their present condition.

²³⁷ Note that al-Hakim is not the first to try to theorise about this "opposition". Both Eastern and Western philosophers have long discussed the opposing qualities or the forces that exist in relation to one another. For example, see Heraclitus on the duality between day and night and Aristotle on opposition.

²³⁸ The meaning of "progress" (Ruqiyy - رقيى - in Arabic) should be understood as rising above a current state and development towards an improved condition.

²³⁹ This was a general criticism that was evident in al-Hakim's regular columns in *al-Ahram* (used as a forum for articles on a confused renaissance) titled "Debates". There, he called for the new generation to learn from their past and to appreciate what their ancestors have achieved in order to have the tools to build a better future for themselves. He also expressed that the rejection of everything that is Western is unjustified. See "The al-Hakim Debates". *Al-Ahram: A Diwan of contemporary life*. (634) *Al-Ahram* online: <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2006/787/chrncls.htm> (accessed 20/06/ 2014).

Egypt's defeat in 1967 and the increasing debates concerning the loss of value or meaning in religions and religious practices.²⁴⁰

ENGULFMENT

A power that inflates wants to engulf another. In social and political fields, for example, capitalism wanted to engulf work, and colonialism wanted to engulf nations. The stronger class wanted to engulf the whole nation, and the West wanted to engulf the East and so on.²⁴¹

Thirdly, the common understanding of engulfment is the act of “swallowing up” or overwhelming by, or as if by, overflowing and enclosing. Al-Hakim describes all forces, whether in our universe or within our own composition, as prone to an act of engulfment. For example, one star or a planet may engulf another if resistance between two parallel pairs fails. The stronger force would supersede the weaker force. Or, in another example, as al-Hakim describes in his series of dualities, the mind engulfs the heart. Similarly, other forces within our composition may engulf one another. He proposes that in some cases (for example the mind versus heart scenario) engulfment leads to psychological or mental illnesses as a result of an imbalanced relationship between these forces. This disruption of our composition is not perceived by him as negative per se, but rather it is perceived as a “temporary” state of imbalance which is both necessary and inevitable at the time of its occurrence.

What is the proposed solution for engulfment according to al-Hakim? When engulfment occurs, another force emerges in order to compensate for the weaker force or for the shortage. Although I would like to claim that, steadily but gradually, an equilibrium state is restored, this is not the highlight of the process. Instead, the importance of this process rests on one factor alone, which is: one force's ability to “compensate” for another. In the case of human imbalance, he explains that the situation is slightly different. It is unfortunate that we are not only ignorant of where the sources of strength reside, but we are also often in denial about our own predicaments and about the occurrence of engulfment (such as in the case of the sole dominance of the mind). Accordingly, we fall into despair instead of finding a force from within us to compensate for any shortage or weakness that we may be experiencing. This denial

²⁴⁰ By this, I am referring to a period where human discoveries were at their peak and had major impact on our lives between 1950 and 1980 (see appendix for the front pages of some of the newspapers- archive materials) such as the invention of a heart-lung machine and its first usage on humans in 1953, building a hydrogen bomb, the introduction of colour television and the discovery of new brain cells etc. Note that al-Hakim was one who familiarised himself with what he referred to in his autobiography as “the news of the world” and thus, he was personally influenced and involved to a great extent in many intellectual and social debates of his time.

²⁴¹ *Equilibrium*, p. 52.

increases our sense of anxiety and hinders us in modern society from finding solutions for our problems. The duality of night and day, for example, is one which describes the process of engulfment as a “*circular* relationship that is based on the principle of swallowing rather than equilibrium.”²⁴² This, however, is not a feature that can be said of all of al-Hakim’s dualities. Evidently from his text, his emphasis is on the relationship of “resistance” between forces and the necessary opposition between them as counterbalancing forces for one another (as I will show in the next section). Contradictorily, the relationships he describes, on the one hand sometimes appear as one of engulfment or swallowing such as in the case of the mind and the heart (or in his drama, in the case of how evil triumphs over the good) and, on the other hand, in other cases they appear as one of strict resistance and dependence (such as the relationship between the human will and the will of the superior). This means that al-Hakim’s dualities cannot be grouped or discussed under one type or frame.

As we examine further the state of equilibrium, we come to realise that “engulfment”, although plausible as a relationship between action and reaction forces, is a non-ideal. Engulfment, as an act of “swallowing”, is not strictly the static condition of humanity and human life as Khoury believed.²⁴³ But one finds the equilibrium doctrine, as a whole, to be one that presents relationships not as “static”, but rather “dynamic”, as I have shown in my previous paragraphs. Swallowing or engulfment is presented as an aspect or a mode of al-Hakim’s equilibrium, and he wanted to show that he was not only aware of its existence, but was also aware of its regular occurrence. To clarify this difference further (in terms of what al-Hakim meant in relation to engulfment and what Khoury may have misunderstood al-Hakim to be saying), I would like to investigate this passage from Khoury’s article in relation to al-Hakim’s doctrine:

By swallowing, I mean *alternation* or *substitution* of the fading of power by a rising power, in a constant alternation between two powers. This is what happens in the relationship between day and night. There is always a day that is *followed by* night and this is also the case of inhaling and exhaling. We cannot unite them in one static condition. There is either “inhaling” or “exhaling”, but there is no simultaneous existence of one activity or power with its contrast and this is the secret of human existence and continuity.²⁴⁴

The very fact that Khoury had used the terms “alternation and substitution” shows that

²⁴² Khoury, Jerries, N. (2007) “al-Hakim’s Equilibrium under the microscope. A study in al-Hakim’s Philosophy through his plays”, *Arabica*, T.54, Fasc.2 April, 2007 T. 54, pp. 189-219. www.brill.nl (<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4057813>) p. 195- 196.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Ibid

there is a clear difference between what he understands and what al-Hakim's doctrine envisages in relation to the notion of engulfment. Al-Hakim explicitly shows that forces must continue to exist *parallel* to one another and continue to be in a relationship of mutual resistance. When engulfment occurs (in other words, when one force exceeds in strength resulting in the weaker force's engulfment), imbalance occurs. This, in his view, is not a bad thing, first because imbalance is temporary and, second, because it gives the weaker force the opportunity to find in itself a source of strength by which it can rise again. The weaker force is not substituted or altered by the rising power. Even when engulfment occurs, the weaker force continues to exist separately and awaits, naturally with time, its chance to rise again to correspond and counterbalance the powerful force in order to restore the mutual resistance that was once in place. al-Hakim's references in both examples, (a) the day and night analogy and (b) the inhaling and exhaling analogy (mentioned in his discussion of engulfment), can be both confusing and misleading. Neither example, in fact, conforms to any of the examples that he referred to in his discussions of the dualities that were described as consequences of imbalance.²⁴⁵ One possible speculation is that al-Hakim was drawing upon his knowledge of Greek philosophers and displaying his readings of similar theories (not very cleverly) and, thus, wanted to give examples that would contrast, in the simplest sense, two forces that are opposed to one another, reacting and compensating.²⁴⁶ Ironically, in spite of his attempts to form his own doctrine and to distance himself from his Western and Eastern influences, he did not, in my view, wander too far. His choice of examples may have been flawed and, of course, at times contradictory, but nevertheless they should not be viewed as an indication of the nature of, or the importance of, his dualities that are described in his doctrine of equilibrium or presented in his narratives.

Based on the above discussions of the three models of polarity, one concludes that the kind of equilibrium claimed by al-Hakim in his doctrine is one that can be easily misunderstood to be, in the general sense of the word, "balance".²⁴⁷ But balance, as an end result, is not his focus or intention. The emphasis of his theory is on the relationship of "resistance" between forces in opposition that react and compensate for one another. He holds that the existence of "resistance" is not only vital between these forces, but is also an integral trait of all creatures'

²⁴⁵ This will be addressed in my following sections. (pp.116- 134).

²⁴⁶ See similar ideas noted by Greek and Islamic medievalist philosophers like Heraclitus, al-Kindi, Ibn Miskawayah, Ibn Tufayl and others. Note that al-Hakim read also the works of Plato, Aristotle and Newton, which were all translated to Arabic by Badawi.

²⁴⁷ That is to say a state of stability and balance between two disharmonious powers which move in contradictory directions. (See Khoury p. 195).

composition. For example, though the relationship between entity (A) and entity (\sim A) may appear to be “balanced” in the first instance, al-Hakim holds that these two entities are in fact in a relationship of resistance and conflict. They are dependent in their existence on one another and the relationship between them is one of opposition and correspondence. The relationship between action and reaction forces, although it may appear as static to some, is in fact a *dynamic* one. Al-Hakim adds that there is a probability, as an outcome of such resistance between forces, for one force to “engulf” or “overwhelm” the other. Every force should ideally maintain “resistance” from engulfment. He clarifies that this resistance is not always efficient or even possible. Engulfment occurs when one force suffers from a shortage or shows signs of weakness which allows for another force to supersede. In our situation, as humans, his proposed solution for overcoming engulfment is for one to “weigh [oneself] towards the opposing forces” and “lest they engulf and reduce [one] to nothingness”,²⁴⁸ it is one’s duty to find a force or an entity that will compensate for the shortage or weakness by the strength in another. Only then can the law of equilibrium promote an indefatigable resistance.²⁴⁹

II.

I would like to explain in this section the series of dualities as described by al-Hakim in his text. First of all, the relationship between these dualities cannot be based on one particular principle that al-Hakim applied or followed. It is noteworthy to mention that these dualities are presented by al-Hakim as consequences of the predicaments that face modern man in the new age. As I mentioned, al-Hakim firstly claims that we are affected by a “spiritual” imbalance in the new age.²⁵⁰ By this, he meant an imbalance in our emotional and intellectual domains.²⁵¹ In *Equilibrium*, the series of dualities present themselves in a non-orderly manner. They are in fact scattered in the text, which is typical of al-Hakim’s style of writing and perhaps, also, typical of an Arabic dialogue (which is what he intended for his text to be). It is impossible, according to Khoury, for one “to join all dualities under one type of relations since there is

²⁴⁸ Ibid

²⁴⁹ I think in comprehending his three models of polarity (Dependency, reaction and counterbalance and engulfment), we have a better chance of comprehending his analogies in the same passage regarding the universe’s natural process of restoring itself over time to overcome a shortage or a weakness, and his strong belief in human beings’ ability to be able to do just the same. This is can also be seen as a common view held by European philosophers who believe that human beings have an internal desire to return to their natural balanced conditions.

²⁵⁰ Note that al-Hakim’s use of the word “spiritual” is mistaken by many critics and readers to refer to one’s *religious* life. To clarify this, al-Hakim explicitly states that he was solely referring to one’s “intellectual and emotional life” and not referring to any other implied religious meaning that the word may carry.

²⁵¹ He notes “what we call mental and psychological illnesses are nothing but an imbalance or disruption in [one’s] equilibrium; either through the expansion of feelings to such a point that thought is nullified or its function disrupted and a human being acts like a child or through the domination of thought to the extent of impeding emotion. Human consciousness, thereby, gets altogether muddled.”

discrepancy and differences in the quality of these relations.”²⁵² Secondly, the significance of the dualities lies in how they are outlined and discussed in the equilibrium doctrine and how they also represent themselves accordingly in al-Hakim’s dramatic works. For example, one could claim that in al-Hakim’s drama, we can identify not just one, but different types of conflicting powers (dualities) as a result of a state of imbalance. Often, in drama, the conflict of powers would be represented in various degrees by al-Hakim’s characters. In doing so, characters lose their human traits or “their relationship with reality”²⁵³ as they allegorically embody certain ideas. The influence of this technique on style and narrative is one where the work appears as a philosophical dialogue presenting to us, readers, a stream of consciousness through characters’ internal or external monologues that reflect their engagement in one, if not many, philosophical debates. Thirdly, the conceptual progression of these dualities relies entirely on how they appear in his text, given that he only conformed to some stylistic or linguistic restrictions. He spoke freely of each duality and jumped back and forth in his discussions making the task of extracting them from the text even more challenging for the reader. Nevertheless, I have attempted to explain them in every way possible and, in the process, I found myself selective in choosing those I saw important to this chapter (in that they parallel al-Hakim’s core claims and arguments in his doctrine of equilibrium).

The first appearance of these dualities is in the early paragraphs of the book where he claims that there is an imbalance between the mind and the heart. This duality is used loosely in order to represent another duality; namely that between science (signified by logic and reason) versus faith (or religions). The duality between the mind and the heart, science and faith, is one that is presumed by al-Hakim to be most apparent at the start of the 20th century, “the new age”. He sees this duality as the source of the problem or at least, as what has triggered what is yet to come in his text. To clarify, the consequences of the sole dominance of the mind in contrast to the decline of religion (or its practices) meant, to him, that we have come to believe that we are (a) superior to other creatures in the universe and that (b) we possess absolute freedom. As I have shown and discussed in the previous chapter, both positions are problematic from his perspective for the reasons I outlined. With this said, I wish to present a summary of these dualities, as described by al-Hakim in his text, in order to support his position. These dualities are: (i) mind versus heart, (ii) the human will versus the divine will

²⁵² Khoury, Jerjes, N. (2007) “al-Hakim’s Equilibrium under the microscope. A study in al-Hakim’s Philosophy through his plays”, *Arabica*, T.54, Fasc.2. April, 2007 T. 54, (pp. 189-219) www.brill.nl (<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4057813>), pp.191- 197.

²⁵³ Ibid, p. 197

(or the will of the unknown “other”, or that which is “superior”), (iii) God versus Satan (or good versus evil). And finally, (iv.) thought versus action.²⁵⁴ In discussing these dualities, I aim to show how they form an integral part of the doctrine of equilibrium, and how they relate to the majority of al-Hakim’s philosophical narratives.

(i) Mind versus heart (Reason versus Faith)²⁵⁵

I believe in the mind, science and freedom of the human being; however, I cannot deny the heart and faith. I do not blame the mind for doubting because that is its function, i.e. motion. For if the mind is cut off from doubt in undertaking research and making its laws and stops its dynamic stirring of facts and results, its work become paralysed and its life ceases. The heart’s function, on the other hand, is faith, i.e. stability.²⁵⁶

In order to fully understand why an author like al-Hakim would claim that there is a duality between the mind and the heart, one should consider the implications of his multiple trips to France and around Europe on his thought and character. The common view is that he was (during his first visit in 1925) a young Egyptian who experienced a culture shock as a result of leaving the East behind to discover the West. This naturally affected him and, initially, his experiences seem to have led him to think that the West represents rational thinking and science, whilst the East represents faith and emotion.²⁵⁷ This analogy evolved into his doctrine of equilibrium and became an issue which he attempted to resolve. His first proposition is that modern man suffers, at the beginning of the 20th century, from an increasing anxiety as a result of the dominance of the mind, i.e. rational thinking (as opposed to employing both domains for example, the mind and the heart). He adds, because we have swung towards the more logical side in attempting to explain all aspects of our being or existence or even our relationship with our surroundings, it has become gradually more difficult to believe in anything that cannot be proven by science or experimentation (hence we resort to rationalising incidents in our daily

²⁵⁴ I have decided to give close attention to this duality in the following chapter in order to form a comparison between al-Hakim’s concept of “commitment” and that of Sartre and also to use it as a reflection on European existentialism as a movement that has inspired many intellectuals to free the Arab mind.

²⁵⁵ This is a different duality from the Western duality of mind-body duality or body-soul duality. The biological function of the heart is overlooked and it is viewed instead as having cognitive attributes as well as signifying faith and emotions.

²⁵⁶ *Equilibrium*, pp. 22-23

²⁵⁷ This is a common view shared by many writers at the time who had similar experiences of the West. This view is evident in his novel *‘Usfur min al-Sharq* published in 1938. He opposed gradually in his career this view and tried to prove otherwise. Thus, taking into consideration that he was still at an early stage of his career in the 30s where he had not yet embarked per se on any philosophical investigations, and had found it sufficient to mask his thoughts and present them in drama and fictional writings, one should neither take his discussion (regarding the rift between science and faith- mind and heart) as an indication of his hostility towards modern science or technology, nor as an expression of his discontent at the thought of employing one’s mind or reason alone. There is a documentary film with the same title, *‘Usfur min al-Sharq*, directed by Ahmad Rashid on 20th February 1976 produced by the Egyptian Union of Cinema.

lives). And although we expect some clarification or examples to explain his position, he gives us none. Instead, he says that there are incidents that are inexplicable and beyond our comprehension. The nature of these incidents and the reasons for their occurrence are left ambiguous in the text, as he writes:

Do you not sometimes feel that someone somewhere is staring at you? And if you raised your head and searched, you would indeed find that your emotion was true. Have you ever noticed once or twice in your life that a particular incident happened to you on a certain occasion that changed the course of your life in a certain way? You attempt to link it to a coincidence, but you fail because an *external will* has intervened in an orderly manner emanating from an awareness that is conscious of what it does and knows what it wants, in order to provoke specific results that would not have happened were it not for this unexpected external intervention. An external willpower that has all the elements of a sage and intelligent will which descends on your ordinary will and changes its direction and paints for it a new path. Sometimes your mind, regardless of the stability and precision of logic it may achieve, refuses to submit such incidents to the usual and simple logical explanation.²⁵⁸

This position is an indication of al-Hakim's realisation at the time that people see religion in a different way and perhaps there is more a chance for societies to become secular (especially with the emergence of atheism in a few countries). It is worth noting that, historically, Egypt experienced secularism for the first time during the French occupation of 1798-1801 and later on, the British occupation between 1882 and 1952. The latter date being three years before *Equilibrium* was published. The occupation allowed for the propagation of Western ideas and pro-secularist intellectuals found it to be an opportunity to speak freely. One influential intellectual who addressed the issue of "the secularisation of the Muslim state" during al-Hakim's time was Egyptian Shaykh Ali Abd Al Raziq (1888- 1966).²⁵⁹ When al-Hakim graduated in 1925 from law school and was ready to travel to France, Raziq's controversial book *Al Islam wa usul al-hukm (Islam and The Principles of Ruling)* was published early the same year. Raziq argues in his book that Islam as a religion should not interfere with political authority on the basis that God called on the Prophet Muhammad to be a "religious advisor or counsellor to his people" and not as a head of state. The book, as anyone can imagine, created a negative stir amongst Muslims fanatics and caused political unrest between Turkey and Egypt. Egypt was under the ruling of the protection of the new Republic

²⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 22.

²⁵⁹ Although Raziq's book brought him fame in 1925, he was condemned as a precursor of secularist philosophy in Muslim societies and in 1940, al-Azhar stripped him of his office then later on, he was reinstituted. Al-Azhar feared the implications of Raziq's writings on the youths and they were right in believing so as he began to attract many followers. He says, "Islam does not advocate a specific form of government (unlike what the Muslim brotherhood group claim today) and that, in the past, the Caliphs used religious law in order to protect their thrones." See Kassab, Elizabeth Suzanne. *Contemporary Arab Thought: Cultural Critique in Comparative Perspective*. Columbia University Press, 2010.

of Turkey. In response to the 1924 decision to abolish the Islamic caliphate,²⁶⁰ Raziq said that Caliphates used a “religious justification” for their ruling, “as a shield protecting their thrones against the attacks of rebels).²⁶¹ Raziq was, accordingly, accused of promoting atheism, his works were censured by al-Azhar scholars, and he was stripped of his office and title as “Shaykh”.²⁶² He was also relieved of his duties as a religious judge. This is not to say that Raziq was not supported then by many writers who admired him and followed in his footsteps. Those who played an influential role and were supporters of Raziq were Taha Husayn²⁶³ and Mohammed Hassanein Haykal,²⁶⁴ both close acquaintances of Tawfiq al-Hakim.

Moreover, the view that there is a duality between the power of the mind and the power of the heart is one that was commonly touched upon by Islamic philosophers and theologians.²⁶⁵ The mind signifies reason and the heart signifies faith and emotions. To briefly clarify this without delving further into details, two particular figures come to mind: the Islamic philosopher and psychologist, Muhammed Zakariyah al-Razi (864-930CE), and the philosopher al-Ghazali (1058 – 1111CE). First, in *Tib al- Fennoon (The Art of Medicine)*, Razi postulated some claims regarding the emotional condition as a mental state (i.e. he held that, in children, fear is a learned condition). He did not form explicit division per se because he was primarily concerned with mental conditions and their treatment within the field of medical ethics. Al-Ghazali,²⁶⁶ on the other hand, who also spoke of fear as a learned condition either gained through negative experiences or taught to children, made clear distinctions. In his discussion of the spirit (*rûh* or soul)²⁶⁷, he identifies two domains, that of the intellect (*‘aql*),

²⁶⁰ Mustafa Kamal (Atatürk) had abolished the Islamic caliphate in 1924 and because many Muslims wanted to elect or appoint a new one, King Fu’ad I proposed himself as a candidate for the caliphate. See Fauzi Najjar, “The debate on Islam and Secularism”, *Arab Studies Quarterly*; 1996, Vol. 18 Issue 2.

²⁶¹ Kemal H. Karpat. (2001) *The Politicization of Islam: Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith, and Community in the Late Ottoman State*. Studies in Middle Eastern History. Oxford University Press.

²⁶² So’ad T. Ali. (2009) *A Religion, not a state: Ali ‘Abd al-Raziq’s Islamic justification of political secularism*. University of Utah Press.

²⁶³ See Glicksberg, Josef Benjamin. *The 1926 Uproar over Taha Husayn’s On Pre-Islamic Poetry: Islamist-Secularist Debate and the Subversion of Secular Identity in Monarchical Egypt*. University of Pennsylvania, delivered at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, August 28 - August 31, 2003

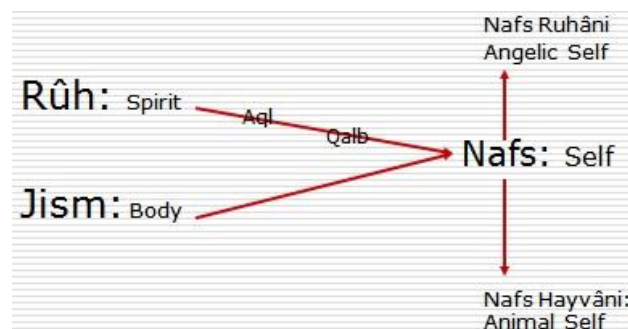
²⁶⁴ See previous chapter and images of Haykal with al-Hakim with Sartre. Haykal was an editor-in-chief of Cairo national newspaper al-Ahram for 17 years (between 1957 and 1974) and has been a respected commentator on Arab affairs for more than 50 years. See also images of him with former President Nasser as a close friend.

²⁶⁵ See medieval philosopher, al-Ghazali on the mind and heart divide. Najub-ud din Muhammed, (lived at the same time as al-Razi) also wrote extensively about mental disorders such as depression, paranoia, persecution complex, sexual dysfunction and obsessional neuroses, amongst a host of other mental ailments.

²⁶⁶ Ghazali studied philosophy (*Falsafah*) for six years upon joining the entourage of his patron, Nizam al-Mulk, who promoted literary and intellectual disciplines among his entourage. It is fair to say that once again, we find an intellectual ruler nurturing the search for knowledge and the process of learning (as during President Nasser’s reign).

²⁶⁷ The difference between the *rûh* and the *nafs* – both which can be translated as “soul” or “spirit” – is a difficult one. The word *nafs* is used in the Qur’ân in various ways. One use of the word refers to the human being as a “body and a soul”. This meaning is the one most frequently encountered in the Qur’ân.

which is the mind, and (qalb), which is the heart. Although al-Ghazali occupied himself with finding out how we can integrate intellectual and rational activity with inner experiencing of truth in a balanced and harmonious way, he did not reach far in his examination. He, did, however, speak of the duality between the body and the spirit (unlike the Western duality of mind and body), as one where the body is “the 'riding-animal' for the spirit (rûh). The essential reality of the human lies in the spirit (rûh), the soul (here, referred to as nafs), the heart (qalb), and the mind (‘aql) or intelligence. The image (below) clarifies these division and how al-Ghazali sees in the human self (nafs) two domains, the body (jism) and the spirit (rûh) where the mind (‘aql) and the heart (qalb) both reside.



Al-Hakim’s examination did not engage with any of al-Ghazali’s ideas regarding the body and soul duality. Instead, the dilemma for him, as I understand it to be, seems to be in how we treat claims derived from either domains; should we listen to the mind or follow the heart? Perhaps, at the first instance, he believes that one should listen to and employ both, although he gradually concedes that, in many cases, this is impossible. The force of the mind and the force of the heart should continue to “resist” attempts of engulfing or superseding one another in order for equilibrium to prevail. This conflict is inevitable to al-Hakim’s doctrine of equilibrium, especially in that it recognises the difficulties that one faces in attempting to employ both domains, the mind and the heart, equally.

The mind must always doubt and ask for evidence, whilst the heart must always believe without proof. Each of them must be seen in its own way and in different circumstances. To get rid of one of them for the sake of the other is a disruption of one of humanity’s features, in the same way as one intervening to limit the other’s freedom leads to halting the course of humanity’s development.²⁶⁸

A plausible argument would be to say that there is a genuine relation of contention in which neither the mind nor the heart ought to prevail. In theory, al-Hakim wishes for his doctrine of equilibrium to reflect a relationship of contention between two domains or forces, namely the mind and the heart. They should be able to live side by side without one engulfing

²⁶⁸ *Equilibrium*, p. 47.

or affecting the other regardless of any conflicts.²⁶⁹ However, he felt that modern man's predicament was already the sole dominance of the mind which questions his surroundings and puts to test the credibility of all he believes in. He writes:

The balance that prevailed until the 19th century between the power of the mind and the power of the heart, i.e. between activities of thought and activities of faith, has been *disrupted* ever since the supremacy of rational scientific achievements and the continuing stagnation of religion.²⁷⁰

This means for al-Hakim that the power of intellect overwhelmed or engulfed the power of faith. As a result of doubt and suspicion, modern man suffers from an ongoing disruption in his "equilibrant composition."²⁷¹ With this said, we understand from the text that al-Hakim neither agrees, for example, to the prioritization of faith to an extent where it becomes positively irrational, nor agrees to attempts to rationalise faith as many thinkers of his time continued to do. Instead, he maintains, as in the above quotation, that faith and reason govern their own domains and that we ought to recognise both powers of these domains to recognise the elements that constitute our "equilibrium" character. I would like to claim that attempts by logical positivists and others to say that all ideas and statements must be subject to thorough rational examination are the kind of claims that al-Hakim warns us from believing or following because, in his view, there are still aspects of our existence and about our universe that are a mystery to us and are not subject to any logical explanations and experimentations.

The claims that champion the use of reason solely as a source of human knowledge have challenged religious thinkers in every age. In some parts of al-Hakim's text, on the one hand, the tone is one of sympathy with religious thinkers who not only struggle to aid our understanding of some of our personal problems, but also are expected, as knowledgeable clerics, to tame our desire for knowledge of the unknown. And on the other hand, al-Hakim talks of his fear of clergy's hidden agendas by which they use the power of the heart (faith and emotion) to overwhelm the power of the mind (i.e. reason replaced by blind faith) and thus influence the decisions of the people.²⁷² The mind and heart duality is, on this basis, an analogy for al-Hakim's feeling towards the divide between the East and the West, the ongoing conflict that he sees as inevitable when trying to employ both domains (the heart and the mind) and

²⁶⁹ See al-Hakim's essay, *Tahta Shams al-Fikr*, section titled "Mantikat al- Iman" (An Area of Faith) where he expresses this idea.

²⁷⁰ *Equilibrium*, p.18

²⁷¹ By this he is referring to the opposing forces in resistance to one another that make-up the human being.

²⁷² This is a subtle reference to clerics who use their positions and use faith to influence the decisions and actions of others in order to reach, or to protect, their positions in the state (similar to some extent to the attack on the appointment of Caliphate in the olden days). It is also a criticism of the Muslim brotherhood groups who were kept under control by President Nasser and who later on became a powerful political threat after Nasser's reign.

finally, the struggle between those who represent faith and emotion (the clergy) and those who represent science and rational thinking.²⁷³

For example, in what seems like a thought experiment, typical of al-Hakim's style, he asks the human heart and the mind two vital questions. Firstly, "is the human being *alone* in the universe? And secondly, "is the human being *free* in this universe?" On the one hand, he claims that the human mind would reply, based on immediate experiences, observations and experimentations, that in the modern age, the human being is indeed alone in this universe without a competitor and that he is the God of this existence possessing ultimate freedom.²⁷⁴ The heart would reply, based on faith and emotions, that it rejects the idea of man's solitude in the universe and having ultimate freedom. The reason why the mind believes so, and the heart does not, is because the mind's reply alone is based on reflections on modern man's triumphs throughout the past years (where the idea of man's solitude or absolute freedom gradually became familiar). Optimistically, al-Hakim argues that, regardless of the sole dominance of the mind, there has been a longing on our part for something that could shed light on our existence or give meaning and purpose to our lives. This longing is, in his view, a step towards having "faith" or "belief". At this point, al-Hakim did not identify whether he meant having belief (in the sense of having a moral stand) or belief in the existence of a superior "other" as he later on specified. He considers the heart's rejection to be of great value because not only does it give hope for faith to exist, but also (following again from the logic of his doctrine of equilibrium) the heart acts as a counterbalancing force for the force of the mind. This inevitable relationship of contention has not only caused us, throughout the past years, an increasing sense of "anxiety"²⁷⁵ but also has been the cause for us falling victims to mental or psychological illnesses.

Another point to consider is that, from al-Hakim's perspective, the heart's objection to the notion of solitude and absolute freedom is evident in how people differed over the years in their methods of searching or longing for a superior "other". This, he saw as a common phenomenon in the modern age, which indicates that there is still hope to find a solution for human anxiety and for the problems that face us as a result of the imbalance caused by the duality between the mind and the heart. He writes:

"The interest today in flying saucers and people's hope that others are coming with a

²⁷³ In *Equilibrium*, p.32, he outlines some of the historical conflicts between the men of religion and the men of science (also between the men of power and the men of action).

²⁷⁴ Ibid, p. 18

²⁷⁵ Al-Hakim's exact word used in his text is "Qalaq" which can be translated as "restlessness" and an increasing sense of anxiety which he predicts will persist throughout the modern age.

message from a better world and superior creatures are nothing but a general breeze to cool the feeling that dried out with the parched spring of religion to relieve human's anxiety and to rescue them a little from their isolation in the universe."²⁷⁶

In concluding this discussion of al-Hakim's mind and heart duality, it is worth stressing that we understand from it two fundamental things. Firstly is that, because modern man fell victim to the dominance of the mind (or that the mind has succeeded over the past years in overwhelming the heart) there are, with the start of the new age, tremendous consequences affecting us. These are:

1. We define the concept of our freedom according to our freedom of thought.
2. We reject anything that cannot be proved with research and experimentation, and hence;
3. We deny another will other than our will or the existence of another than ourselves.

And accordingly, these consequences, outlined by al-Hakim and seen as negative, affect, if not alter, our moral choices and actions.²⁷⁷ There is no doubt that al-Hakim considers humans' search for a superior "other", in various ways and forms, (along with what he sees as the heart's objection to the idea of humans' solitude and possessing absolute freedom) as a reassurance that our "equilibrism composition" is capable of restoring itself by itself naturally and over time. This is an idea that is underlying his doctrine of equilibrium from the start. Can we, by taking a step back from al-Hakim's doctrine, see the relevance of his examination of such duality (the mind and the heart) in our 21st century? There are clearly no signs of stopping human beings' curiosity or desire for knowledge. The extent of technological and scientific achievements in our present day is vast. Some may even go on further to say that the psychological and mental illnesses and the increasing anxiety are simply a small cost that we have to endure for modernity. And also, as a result of the sheer amount of experimentations that had lethal results or have sprung out of human control, resulting in deadly catastrophes in many countries over the past years, we have, as al-Hakim predicted, grown more and more fearful than ever of our own physical destruction. He writes:

Man has developed tremendous and devastating material capabilities that could at any moment escape his control and become his own destruction. These capabilities are only reined in by wisdom, but as [a human being] *cannot* guarantee this wisdom, he grows *anxious* of his own safety and existence. [And thus he] lives day by day in this new era looking at the scale of equilibrium between power and wisdom with wondering *restless* eyes.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁶ Ibid. p. 19

²⁷⁷ The first and third proposition are interrelated and al-Hakim discusses them further in his doctrine of equilibrium when he examines the question of human freedom in relation to the divine will (the subject of the next duality). As for the second proposition, addressing the rejection of anything that cannot be proven by experimentation, I have attempted to explain it above as discussed and presented in his text.

²⁷⁸ *Equilibrium*, p. 19

Mind and Heart duality in *Shahrazad*

If one attempts to examine al-Hakim's dramatic works in relation to his doctrine of equilibrium (especially in relation to the duality between the mind and the heart), by looking, for example, at *Shahrazad* (1934), one can see in the way the characters represent specific traits how this technique reflects al-Hakim's discussion of the mind versus heart duality. At the beginning, al-Hakim puts man's "intellect [the mind] and the heart in an alternate dialogue with nature in order to show us in the end that none of these [characters] can live independently of the other or can achieve universal nature and stability if [they] live in separation, loneliness and seclusion."²⁷⁹ An equilibrist individual should recognise the power of both domains; the mind and the heart, and acknowledge that they should be employed wisely in different situations in life. To clarify, in al-Hakim's narrative, the character Shahrayar is presented as a representative of the mind whereas the character of Minister Qamar is a representative of the heart. Shahrayar, who is restless, looks at Shahrazad, representative of nature, with both doubt and fright. He is able to acknowledge the power of the heart only through the attractive traits that nature (Shahrazad) possesses such as stability, tranquillity and serenity. He, as a representative of the mind, relentlessly searches for knowledge only to find at the end of his quest that his search was in vain. He is lost "suspended between the earth and the sky"²⁸⁰ unable to restore himself to a state of equilibrium. As for the Minister Qamar, representative of the heart, he also, like Shahrayar, has failed in his quest and is unable to maintain balance between pure love and bodily lust. As for nature, Shahrazad, she triumphs at the end by remaining unmoved, constant. The allegorical events of this play, therefore, present to us, in this manner, three extreme characters who are in desperate need for a restoration of balance in order to achieve what al-Hakim refers to as a sound human nature, or as he claims "a healthy equilibrist composition".

(ii) Human will versus divine will

The truth that I would like to rightly be in place is that I *am* a dualist (*Ta'aduli*), meaning that man's will is on one side corresponded by the will of the divine on the other, just as the human mind is on one side and faith is on the other.²⁸¹

The common understanding of what al-Hakim writes here is that, unlike the Greek's polytheistic duality between man and multiple Gods, he, being a monotheist, suggests a duality

²⁷⁹ See Muhammad Mandur for a dramatic analysis of al-Hakim's *Shahrazad*, pp. 58-65
<http://www.yabeyrout.com/pages/index1107.htm>.

²⁸⁰ Al-Hakim. Tawfiq (1934) *Shahrazad*. Cairo. Maktabat Misr, p. 23.

²⁸¹ Ibid, p. 23

between man and God. This understanding is not strictly correct. What al-Hakim is saying here is that, as an equilibrist, one should believe that one force, such as man's will, is opposed by another, in this case, the will of the divine or a superior (a will that is capable of changing one's destiny and works in mysterious ways to do so). The counterbalance between the two, the will of man and the will of the unknown is evident in different scenarios in life. It is my belief that the concept of the "divine" here is used in the context of that which is "superior" (i.e. works in mysterious ways) than as a reference to a specific God per se. The will of the unknown, the "other", or that which is "superior" is presented in different ways in al-Hakim's narrative. For example, age, death, knowledge of the truth and the will of the other are all external factors that affect one's course of life. We cannot control these factors put in our paths or grasp incidents that our mind fail to find explanations and answers for. It is plausible that al-Hakim avoided in his text giving further clarifications on this matter so as not to delve into a debate with fanatics. He resorted, more importantly, to highlighting the power of human emotions as a domain that is not always easy to explain; especially when it comes to explaining having "faith" in the presence of a superior. Moreover, al-Hakim claims that the mind, over the past years, has been a powerful source of knowledge and as a consequence of that, it has led us into thinking (and believing) that our will is the only will present in this universe. There are three ways of understanding this claim: (1) He is saying that there is still a lot about our universe and about our being that we are unaware of, or (2) We have very limited capabilities that cannot allow us to see or to find in our immediate experiences proof of anything else beyond our own existence, or (3) We have become accustomed to how our minds provide rational explanations, and when it fails to do so, we construct our own versions of the truth or what we perhaps are comfortable believing. Each of these claims pose a new set of questions for al-Hakim. The ambiguity of his writing means that I cannot say with certainty which of these claims he wishes to address. However, his approach encourages us, the readers, to think (and question) all of the above.

It would be erroneous to believe, based on the mind's denial of another will such as the will of the divine, that there is or appears to be no evidence of the existence of another will regardless of the many ways or aspects the other will may be able to manifest itself.²⁸² This, seemingly inevitable process in every man's life (where he doubts faith in the existence of the other) is, according to al-Hakim, because our search is primarily and strictly in our immediate

²⁸² It would also be erroneous to ignore the past scholarly work that deals with just that; the question of the existence of the other (in our universe and in regards to our existence).

experiences. This is something that al-Hakim sees as problematic.²⁸³ He asks consequently, why can't the mind accept the notion of a superior being?²⁸⁴ He answers, although the mind is capable of recognising the notion of superiority, it is incapable of creating an image that matches the idea's grandeur. So going back to his initial question of "are we *alone* in the universe?", the immediate answer given by the mind is "Yes, we *are* alone in the universe", since we can neither find evidence in our immediate experiences that indicates the existence of a superior being with certainty, nor can we imagine the superior being's existence. But surely, this is an argument that has long been debated and refuted by both European and Islamic philosophers of metaphysics.²⁸⁵ Could al-Hakim be here merely echoing their debate by asking his readers: if something does not exist in our immediate experience, and we cannot see it (or be certain of its existence using any of our senses) and our minds fail to create an image for it when it is required to do so, can we still claim, with certainty, that it does not exist? This question is the essence of what al-Hakim is implying and challenging his readers with in his explanations of the duality between the human will versus the existence of a divine will. He writes:

This realisation of a superior being is not, to me, a simple religious doctrine, but rather a human necessity, similar in status to that of animals' realisation of the existence of stronger beings... For animals, the feeling of the presence of stronger being stimulates power, just as the feeling of the presence of the superior, for human beings, stimulates transcendence.²⁸⁶

Human will versus divine will in *King Oedipus*

If we look at the dramatic works, we will find that al-Hakim's play *King Oedipus* (1949) is one that shows a duality or conflict between the Godly will and the human will. Influenced by the Greek text by Sophocles (d. in 405 B. C.), he describes a conflict between truth and

²⁸³ G. V. Tutungi notes that al-Hakim was at a very young age obsessed with the unseen. "He believed in the existence of spirits and insisted they filled the house at night. He also believed that he was capable of foretelling events. He was deeply upset by death" See examples given from al-Hakim's life reflecting this in G. V. Tutungi's thesis on al-Hakim in 1966, which is a comparative study submitted to the Comparative literature department at Indiana University. pp. 2-34. Chapter 1 on al-Hakim's Early Upbringing.

²⁸⁴ See *Equilibrium*, p.20. Here, al-Hakim argued that human beings' realisation that a "superior being" exists is a *human necessity* rather than a religious doctrine.

²⁸⁵ See Secada, Jorge. (2000) *Cartesian Metaphysic: the Scholastic Origins of Modern Philosophy*. Cambridge University Press. P.67 In particular, discussions of Descartes' *a priori* knowledge and arguments for God, as well as other arguments for and against the existence of God by Aquinas, Ibn Rushd, al-Ghazali, al-Razi (Besides, as early as the 9th century, there are also arguments for and against the existence of God by the Mu'tazilite and al-Baghdadi. See *History of Philosophy in Islam* (1903), London. p. 159.

²⁸⁶ The notion of "transcendence" in this context means for one to rise above a present condition by exerting individual or collective effort to improve and progress. *Equilibrium*, p.25.

reality, or, at times, imagination and reality.²⁸⁷ Tiresias is both the messenger, who tells of Oedipus's origin, and the author of the message, in that he is the one telling of Oedipus' fate. Tiresias shows that truth can become malleable; shaped by the force of the will. He says, "I see nothing. And I see no God in existence save our own volition. I willed, and to that extent was divine, that you [Oedipus] are on the throne is nothing other than a manifestation of my will".²⁸⁸ He is capable of altering, or shaping, the absolute divine truth with his mind in the absence of a divine will. Unlike Sophocles, al-Hakim gives more significance to the character of the modern Tiresias as one who is parallel to the character Oedipus and is aware that his fate and that of Oedipus are tied to one another. Allegorically, and perhaps also ironically, Tiresias is not a spokesman for the God Apollo, but he possesses enough power to play with Oedipus' fate.²⁸⁹ In a dialogue with Oedipus Tiresias says, "I am withdrawing my hand this time in order to see what will happen",²⁹⁰ as if possessing the upper hand in changing Oedipus' fate and in doing so, he is encouraging Oedipus to abandon his quest for the all-encompassing truth. By the end, Tiresias's prophecy is fulfilled and Oedipus's family is, accordingly, tormented as a result of this master/slave relationship between the two characters that represent the interplay of human will versus divine will. Tiresias adds, "You [Oedipus] truly had free will. But it was always operating, without your knowing or sensing it, within the framework of heaven's will. You fell. But you swept us along with you."²⁹¹ And with this statement, according to al-Hakim, Tiresias has become a mad slave to the heavens. The events of the play unfold rapidly to reach the end which echoes al-Hakim's own belief in his equilibrium doctrine; namely that we must submit to a notion of truth that is present outside of our immediate experiences, especially in relation to the existence of a divine will or the existence of a superior being.

(iii) God versus Satan (Good versus Evil)²⁹²

God alone is the one almighty and omnipotent, and *yet* he created with his own accord another *opposing* force, that is the power of Satan in order for human life to begin.²⁹³

It is a common view in religions such as Islam and Christianity that, on the one hand, Satan is an embodiment of evil and darkness and, on the other hand, God is an embodiment of

²⁸⁷ Khoury, p. 200

²⁸⁸ Conway, Stephen. (1995) "Truth and Tiresias in Sophocles' Cambridge University Press, 1995 and al-Hakim's Oedipus" See also al-Hakim's *al-Malik Udib (King Oedipus)*. pp. 89-90

²⁸⁹ Also see Hutchins' *The Reader's Guide*, p. 103 chapter on al-Hakim's "Plays of the mind".

²⁹⁰ Conway, Stephen. (1995) "Truth and Tiresias in Sophocles' and al-Hakim's Oedipus". Cambridge University Press.

²⁹¹ Ibid, pp. 123-124

²⁹² Although this has been an analogy in religions, al-Hakim uses it freely without a specific reference to any.

²⁹³ *Equilibrium*, p.51.

peace, light and goodness. Satan, perhaps throughout the history of mankind, is constantly blamed for attempting to lure us, humans, into committing evil deeds and, accordingly, diverting our path from the righteous one. Al-Hakim's representation of Satan is one that is far more interesting than blaming Satan for all our sins. Satan is presented as a necessary, dependent and counterbalancing force to that of the good. Without the good, there cannot be evil and vice versa. Not just that, but also al-Hakim goes on further to give Satan, in his writing, human attributes to show that Satan is not after all "the bad guy". The duality between God and Satan is not explicit in *Equilibrium* as it is in his philosophical narratives. In *Equilibrium*, he talks of the duality between good and evil in terms of crime and punishment, I will not focus on this discussion here, rather I will discuss in the following sections the duality between God versus Satan in light of a few of al-Hakim's selected works, such as his play *Izis* (1955), his short story '*Ahd al-Shaytan* (1938) and, more importantly, his philosophical narrative *Arini Allah* (1953).²⁹⁴

In *Izis* (1955),²⁹⁵ first of all al-Hakim introduces the character Osiris as a representative of the power of good parallel to the character of Tifan who is a representative of the power of evil. Following from the logic of the doctrine of equilibrium, al-Hakim describes the relationship between his characters as one of contradiction, conflict and counterbalance. Osiris's role extends to also represent the "isolated intellectual", who was torn between "activity" or action and politics. This duality was touched upon explicitly in al-Hakim's doctrine and rejected as the intellectual should refrain from joining any political party because he will be representing the party's agenda when he should instead maintain freedom of thought.²⁹⁶ Tifan, as an active politician, was trying to lure Osiris and involve him in political activities. Osiris's resistance eventually failed and he was "engulfed" by Tifan's attempts. I would like to argue that Osiris's failure meant that there was a need for resistance and struggle against the opposing force. For example, in a parallel scenario, in regards of the character of Izis, who was a constant symbol in al-Hakim's work,²⁹⁷ was on her way back to authority; she

²⁹⁴ Note that this was two years before *Equilibrium* in 1955.

²⁹⁵ Izis is a Goddess in Ancient Egyptian religious beliefs of motherhood, fertility and a patroness of nature and magic. Her myth was popular in the Greco-Roman period. Al-Hakim, Tawfiq. (1955) *Izis*, Maktabat Misr, Cairo. Egypt. p. 156

²⁹⁶ See *Equilibrium*, pp. 33-34 on the duality between thought and action. Al-Hakim criticised Sartre's political engagements and claimed that an intellectual's duty was to maintain freedom of thought. See chapter three, page 140 on the role of the intellectual in society.

²⁹⁷ He refers to Izis as a Goddess in his novel '*Awdat al-Ruh, al-Ribat al-Muqadas, Shahrazad* and the character of Prisca in *Ahl al-Kahf*. All heroines were Isis figures according to Hutchins's *A Reader's Guide*. (2003) Three Continent Press. p. 99.

and her sons, as Khoury claims,²⁹⁸ were able to drag “the good ones to do some evil in order to regain equilibrium and rights”. And in doing so, al-Hakim succeeds in showing that good by itself was *not* sufficient enough to achieve balance. The role of evil was just as necessary and as important as the role of the good.

Secondly, in the case of *'Ahd al-Shaytan* (1938), al-Hakim takes a different approach to the work. He begins his work by setting the scene, whereby he himself is sitting at his desk surrounded by many books, one of which is the story of “Faust”.²⁹⁹ He admits he has only managed to read a few pages of it.³⁰⁰ He then tells the story of Faust in his own way.³⁰¹ He narrates that there was an old scientist who was lamenting (via a personal monologue) his life and how he spent it searching for knowledge rather than enjoying it as others of his age had done. The scientist, who was sitting alone quietly reading a book on astronomy, was suddenly disturbed by a voice addressing him from a dark corner claiming that he had heard what the scientist had said to himself. We, thus, have a dialogue between Faust, the scientist, and the devil. The identity of the speaker from the dark corner is not revealed to us, the readers, until this point, which is when the scientist persistently asks who was speaking to him from the dark corner. The voice answers, firstly, “you mortals always want to know, are always in love with knowledge. Is it not enough that I can give you everything you wish for?” And, after a few moments of mystery and tension, and when the scientist asks again, the reply is finally “I am the devil”. The significance of this work lies, in my view, first, in the fact that al-Hakim gives the devil explicitly both human and divine traits, and secondly, in that the work shows the beginning of al-Hakim’s use of extensive dialogues whilst being inspired by Goethe’s *Faust*. There are no specific plots per se other than al-Hakim’s own narration of what has happened in parts of Faust’s story and his own thoughts, reflections, imagination and descriptions of a specific night. Regardless of the literary value of this work, it is an example of al-Hakim’s experimentation with Western texts and his own philosophical ideas. Al-Hakim narrates, when the devil revealed himself to the scientist, he did so as a human being, claiming, “there, I am a human like you, must I be a human like you for you to understand me? You do not see anything else, but that which appears only in your *own* form.”³⁰² This echoes al-Hakim’s view that we are incapable of seeing or reaching beyond our own existence and beyond the limits of our

²⁹⁸ See Khoury, p. 200.

²⁹⁹ Goethe’s *Faust*.

³⁰⁰ This is the translated version of Goethe’s *Faust* by Arab existentialist ‘Abdel Rahman Badawi. See Introduction: Background and Influences on Badawi and his work. An image of the front cover of Badawi’s Arabic translation can be found in appendix I, p.180

³⁰¹ Al-Hakim, Tawfiq. (1938) *'Ahd al-Shaytaan*, p.17.

³⁰² This is my own translation of the Arabic text.

knowledge (in regards to that which is unknown, i.e. the existence of a superior being, for example). This is presented in the doctrine of equilibrium.³⁰³

On the one hand, in a parallel scenario, the narrator, al-Hakim says that Faust's story concludes by the devil granting Faust what he wished for: namely, youth in return for his soul.³⁰⁴ And on the other hand, al-Hakim, in a shift in his dialogue, presents himself as a character who (on a specific night) calls for the devil to come and take his soul in return for "knowledge" (or the "love of knowledge"). In the following sections of the text, al-Hakim tells of another imaginary dialogue between himself and the devil in which he asks the devil to be granted Faust's soul (which the devil had previously acquired) in order to spend all his life devoted to knowledge. The devil, who is sympathetic, advises him against his ill choice saying that he is not accustomed to giving positive advice³⁰⁵ and that nothing can replace his youth. Al-Hakim, determined, rejects the devil's advice and seals the deal. The story ends with al-Hakim narrating how he has spent almost thirteen years since this night (since the imaginary incident), delving into every work of literature, art, science and philosophy he can find. He has immersed himself in the search for knowledge so much that one day an old woman³⁰⁶ says to him "Look at yourself in the mirror, what is this life you are living?" When he perceives his own reflection, he shouts "The devil has stolen my youth!" I should perhaps note that, regardless of its success or failure in the eyes of readers and critics, this story is not an indication of *all* of al-Hakim's other short stories. He wrote extensively and, perhaps, this is a reason for me to conclude that what one can say of one story, cannot be said of another. The simplicity reflects al-Hakim's personal ideas regarding a duality that, at the time, began to interest him and occupy his mind, namely that between God and Satan. Thus, the way in which he presents this duality in his drama varies in style, quality and degree. But the main general framework of al-Hakim's thought has always been constant as an underlying tone in his texts. This underlying tone, or view, is that Satan *is* God's counterbalancing force; each depends on the other to exist in order for the equilibrium of the world to be maintained. This, again, is something that is conveyed in his *Equilibrium*.

The third and final work that one should look at in order to understand al-Hakim's duality is his series of philosophical short stories, *Arini Allah* (1953). One of the many stories

³⁰³ See text, *Equilibrium*, p. 20 on the mind's incapability to accept or grasp the notion of the existence of the superior.

³⁰⁴ Al-Hakim, Tawfiq. (1938) '*ahd al-Shaytan*'. Maktabat al-Adab.

³⁰⁵ Humour plays a vital role in this tale as well as irony.

³⁰⁶ She is presumably a cleaner in his household or office.

in this book is “al- Shahid” (The Martyr)³⁰⁷. This story is significant because it highlights not only the duality between God and Satan, but also shows the importance of distinguishing between the force of goodness and the force of evil. The story begins with a stranger’s arrival to the Vatican where the Pope resides and the church bells are ringing as an indication that there is some sort of a religious ceremony taking place. The stranger walks directly up to the Pope and, in a dialogue, reveals to him that the reason for his visit is to ask for forgiveness and to repent of all his sins. From this dialogue, we, the readers are able to identify that this stranger is in fact Satan who is repenting because he has had enough of being the “embodiment of evil and darkness”. As he expresses his discontent with his situation and willingness to join the Christian faith and join those who represent goodness, the Pope is astonished at how remorseful and sincere Satan’s plea is. Satan has put forward a very convincing case for himself as an individual and he has also quoted Jesus on the right of every individual to repent and be forgiven. The Pope, still puzzled and reluctant to grant Satan forgiveness or to allow him into the Christian faith, faces a dilemma.

In a monologue, we are presented with a series of questions that occupy the Pope’s mind. Some of these are: “If Satan is allowed to repent, how will people continue to commit sins? Will there still be a belief in a judgement day? Will those who commit evil acts, who have been lured by Satan, be also forgiven for what they have committed? Or will they be judged for what they have committed prior to Satan’s act of repentance? What will be the use of the bible, religious tales, myths and legends that all depict evil? What will happen to the world if it is void of evil?”³⁰⁸ The Pope, although humbled by Satan’s request and the manner in which he chose him rather than others to come to first, realises that the matter is a dangerous one and that there are many unanswered questions. In the end, he rejects Satan’s request and dismisses him. Al-Hakim’s skilful use of this scenario shows how Satan’s role is crucial in maintaining the scale of the equilibrium in the world; evil is of great value to goodness and vice versa. Following from his doctrine of equilibrium, he thus confirms that without the one, there can be no other.

In a second scenario, Satan knocks on the door of a Kohen, the Jewish priest, and asks to join Judaism so that he can worship God and join others in their good deed under the Jewish faith. Again, questions such as “If Satan repents, what will differentiate between some people from others? If we allow Satan to join Judaism, what consequences will this have? This time

³⁰⁷ Al-Hakim, Tawfiq. (1953) *Arini Allah*, second story in the book titled “al- Shahid” (The Martyr), pp. 10-21.

³⁰⁸ Ibid, my own translation, see appendix I.

too Satan is dismissed after the Kohen tells him that the implications of what he requests are far more serious than in the case of any other individual. Satan leaves disappointed, but still determined to join a faith and repent his sins, since he believes that he is the most religious of all God's angels. He makes his way to al-Azhar to meet a Shaykh to make a final plea to join Islam. In this third scenario, the Shaykh, like others before him, patiently listens to Satan's plea and request. He thinks to himself, as did the others, "If Satan repents, how will Muslims be able to read the Quranic verse without abolishing Satan in the name of God?"³⁰⁹ How can I support Satan's act of repentance without affecting adversely the Islamic faith?"³¹⁰ Once again, Satan's quest is rejected and he is sent away by al-Azhar Shaykh who informs Satan that a Shaykh's sole role is to promote Islam as a religion.

The finale of this story is one that highlights the human traits that al-Hakim attributes to Satan. He describes how Satan's feelings palpitated at the sight of everything that is pure, good and innocent. He yearns to commit a good deed that will compensate past sins. He feels deprived of goodness and cursed by the mere fact that his role is essential if goodness is to live on. In anger, he flies towards the gates of heaven and is met by Gabriel. In a dialogue, Satan tells Gabriel that he wants forgiveness for his sins. Gabriel informs him that he has come "too early". His presence, as Satan, on earth is vital for the cosmic order to be maintained. He says, "Good has no meaning without evil, there is no righteous path without the presence of a sinful one, there is no justice without that which is unjust and no light without darkness. People will not be able to see God's light without the aid of your darkness."³¹¹ Satan, finally, with happiness and relief, realises the importance of his role and his duty; namely, that his presence on earth is vital for goodness itself to exist. His dark nature must remain in order to be able to reflect God's light. And by this, he, Satan, according to al-Hakim, is "the martyr" who sacrifices himself, tolerates a false reputation as "the angel who rebelled against God", when the truth of the matter is that he is God's most faithful worshipper.

In conclusion of this chapter, I hope that my analysis of al-Hakim's works and my

³⁰⁹ In the Quran, Surat The Bees (*al-Nahl*), verse 16:98, God commanded, "when [you] recite the Qur'an, seek refuge with Allah from the accursed Satan. Abolishing Satan in God's name (known as *Ista'aza*) is the act of saying, before reading the Holy Quran, "*Audhu billahi min ash-Shaytan-ir Rajeem*". Its purpose is to help to protect one against the manoeuvrings of Satan (*shaytan*). It is also mandated to be said in a low tone during prayer in order for one to seek protection against Satan who is waiting for a chance to lure one into sin. If *Ista'aza* is not said, it is believed that Satan will succeed in luring one away from God. It will also be an act of disobeying God, who commanded us to do so. Al-Hakim uses humour and sarcasm in presenting the position of the Shaykh, who represents Islamic dogma. If similar questions are asked, in his view, the clergy will not be able to answer or clarify. Al-Hakim holds that one should attempt to understand such dilemmas and possibilities regarding one's faith and religion to avoid it becoming a case of "blind faith".

³¹⁰ See Al-Hakim's *Arini Allah* (1953), second story in the book titled "al-Shahid" (The Martyr) p. 12

³¹¹ Ibid, p. 19 This is my translation of Gabriel's speech to Satan.

explanation of the most important dualities in his doctrine aid the readers to grasp how these dualities are used and described in relation to the doctrine of equilibrium and are shown in al-Hakim's dramatic works. Satan, from al-Hakim's perspective, is clearly more than just a counterbalancing force for goodness. He has made of Satan a hero: a martyr who sacrificed himself for others. Satan's refusal to bow to Adam is viewed as an act of "a true worshiper" whose only wish is to continue solely to worship and to love God. Hence, he, Satan, is misunderstood. With this in mind, I would like to highlight al-Hakim's passage (below), taken from *Equilibrium* in order to further support my discussions. He writes:

You are an equilibrist if you believe that good and evil are two modes of human being. Good must equalise and *counterbalance* evil. One must not penalise an evil doer by cropping his personal freedom because the counterbalance is *not* between evil and freedom; there is no link between them but the counterbalance should be between good and evil. Reward, thus, is an act of goodness which counterbalances and equalises an evil act.³¹²

From this passage, we conclude that we, accordingly, have within us two conflicting forces, that of evil and good. When one side overcomes or engulfs the other, we are sinful or evil and vice versa. Al-Hakim explains that a person, who commits a crime or an evil act on the one hand, can equally commit a good deed on the other.³¹³ Such a moralistic polarity puts forward al-Hakim's belief that evil-doers should be punished not by depriving them of their freedom (i.e. imprisonment), but on the contrary, by giving them the opportunity to commit good deeds in return, in order to benefit society and as commensurate with their evil actions. A society, he says, should take an attitude of "the demander of a state of equilibrium" from the evil-doer to commit good deeds, rather than taking an attitude of an avenger.³¹⁴ The price of crime is, thereby, paid not at the expense of human freedom, but by partaking in positive work that matches and compensates for wrong actions.³¹⁵

³¹² *Equilibrium*, p. 48

³¹³ *Ibid*, p. 27

³¹⁴ In his view, this is a restoration of balance.

³¹⁵ *Ibid*. The idea of "rehabilitating" the wrong-doer is not a new one. It is not perhaps implemented strictly as al-Hakim suggests in his doctrine of equilibrium, nevertheless it is one that has been long debated by sociologists and reformists who also see the merits of this idea.

CHAPTER THREE

EQUILIBRIUM AND EXISTENTIALISM

“I analyse my readings into elements which suit my conscious and unconscious composition.”³¹⁶

The overarching aim of this chapter is to show the relationship between al-Hakim’s doctrine of equilibrium and existentialism. It is fair to say that at the heart of al-Hakim’s philosophy is the belief that every man has a unique experience of life rather than has a being or essence. He, fascinated by Sartre’s ideas on freedom, examined it further in his own doctrine of equilibrium. His philosophical and literary experimentations highlight man’s estrangement from his own true self and from others.³¹⁷ And gradually, it becomes apparent to al-Hakim that throughout the experiences in life, there is a necessity which is laid upon oneself to make moral choices. Freedom, he says, comes with responsibility. As a result, his protagonists, in struggling to make moral choices, experience emotions like despair, love, hate, alienation, guilt, anxiety and fear.³¹⁸ These, in his opinion, are experienced as a result of one’s coming to terms with the nature of one’s existence and realising one’s impotence in the face of the superior “other”.³¹⁹ With this said, I would like to identify and critically assess what I may refer to as existentialist characteristics in al-Hakim’s thought, and in his doctrine of equilibrium and, perhaps more so, in a selection of his narratives.

In this chapter I will use a comparative approach to discuss each of al-Hakim’s and Sartre’s conceptions of commitment and freedom.³²⁰ In doing so, I hope to show their different understandings of the role of the intellectual in society (and perhaps also, the role of

³¹⁶ This is my translation of a quote from al-Hakim’s series of autobiographical letters, *Zahrat al-’Umr*, p. 42

³¹⁷ The theme of spiritual bareness and the absence of God is recurrent in the literature of this century i.e. Eliot’s “Hollow Man”. As expressed by Nietzsche’s “God is dead” which echoes through the majority of existentialists’ writings, modern man finds himself the only creature who is “self-surpassing” (he can become something other than he is through his own actions and decisions). This is because there is no God to give purpose to the universe, each man must accept individual responsibility for his own becoming, a burden made heavier by the fact that in choosing for himself, he chooses for all men “the image of man as he ought to be.” Sartre says, a man is the sum total of the acts that make up his life- no more, no less- and though the coward has made himself cowardly, it is always possible for him to change and make himself heroic.

³¹⁸ From reading *Zahrat al-’Umr* (series of letters), I conclude that al-Hakim formed his beliefs based on his readings of Western prominent names, some of which he explicitly mentioned, such as Aristotle, Bernard Shaw, Dickens, Nietzsche and Shakespeare, while others seem to have had an indirect influence on his character and writings.

³¹⁹ To be understood as either: (a) a superior being or (b) the sum of unknown forces. Both affect one’s course in life.

³²⁰ I do not think I will be able to address this issue without also speaking of al-Hakim’s conception of tragic existence as a result of his belief in the existence of hidden forces that alter our destiny.

philosophy). The comparison between al-Hakim and Sartre in respect of their different conceptions of freedom will address the question of whether, in their view, freedom is absolute or restricted. For al-Hakim, freedom is restricted by direct and indirect forces whereas, for Sartre, freedom is absolute. And to conclude, I will identify, from some examples from al-Hakim's writings, what I believe to be existential characteristics. I will look at his play *Pygmalion*. Generally speaking, the existential characteristics present themselves in the form of estrangements towards oneself and "the other" leading, naturally and also inevitably, to struggle, conflict and a growing anxiety as a result of the necessity of making moral choices.

I.

From my previous chapters, I hope that it has become clearer that al-Hakim recognised an opportunity to form a comprehensive philosophy for his generation, as 'Abdel Rahman Badawi attempted to do before him. Badawi, inspired by existentialism as the future of post-World War II European philosophy, found himself in the same boat as al-Hakim and other intellectuals in his attempts to fuse existentialism with suitable strains of Eastern philosophy. But whilst Badawi fused existentialism with Sufism,³²¹ al-Hakim fused existentialism with his own equilibrium doctrine. I believe that al-Hakim's fusion works best but the general public's view has been varied. For example, the first quotation supports my view whilst the second shows that others, to a certain extent, disagreed:

Even though during the 1950s and 1960s, Badawi was the most serious existentialist philosopher in the region, his existentialism was *not*, so to speak, "operational" enough, for it lacked a real-life application and a political and ethical community to support it.³²²

It [Badawi's existentialism: Western and Sufi] was, as the philosophy itself held, a one-man project of radical individualism that eventually functioned primarily as an important philosophical reference source for future writers in the Arab world as well as in Africa.³²³

This varied view has been common amongst intellectuals and scholars of this period. Perhaps, more now than before, they would agree with me that al-Hakim's fusion works best on the basis that he used philosophical narratives, i.e. drama, to communicate his ideas. This is what Badawi lacked: namely an approach that seemingly entertains and, at the same time, encourages the readers to think and continue to be intellectually engaged. Al-Hakim is a master

³²¹ See *Hiwar ma' al mufakir el Taqaddumi Mahmud Amin al- 'alim*, Adab w Naqd 1, no. 21 (1986): p 99-117

³²² Di- Capua, Yoav. "Arab Existentialism: An Invisible Chapter in the Intellectual History of Decolonization". October 27, 2012. <http://ahr.oxfordjournals.org/> [accessed 20/04/2014] p.1069.

³²³ Mourad, Wahba, "Contemporary Muslim Philosophies in North Africa," in Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, ed., *African Philosophy: An Anthology* (Oxford, 2000), pp.50-55.

of just that. There is a lack of objective material on Badawi's philosophy, character and work. In fact, excluding the above quote, his name has not once been mentioned in a positive light. And some have gone even further, to say that his name has been long forgotten and that his philosophical legacy is (sadly) gone.³²⁴ For example, one critic writes:

Badawi has left behind no family, no friends, no disciples, and no school. Now that both national life and world philosophy have taken radically new turns, his books may not be perceived as the most relevant. Thus, the Sufi imperative of the world as existence finds poignant expression in his death: now that he no longer exists, there is not the slightest sign of the world he occupied.³²⁵

The development of al-Hakim's philosophy in relation to European existentialism, on the other hand, has appeared and reappeared in a few scholarly discussions over several years.³²⁶ The most recent of these attempts was by Rasheed el- Enany. He argues in his article³²⁷ that al-Hakim used Arabic fiction in order to offer a treatment of the theme of cultural encounter or conflict between the East and the West. This is partly true given that the plays written between 1923 and 1925 (before his travels) show that he was adapting French plays prior to any contact with the West. These plays were: *Khatim Sulayman* (*Soloman's Ring*), adapted from a French play *La Fille De Narbonne*, al-Hakim's *Al 'Aris* (*The Groom*), adapted from a French play *Le Couple Artun*,³²⁸ and his version of *Ali Baba*, which he adapted from *Alf Layla wa- Layla* (*A Thousand and One Nights*). These texts are, unfortunately, either lost or damaged. However, in an interview with Dr Muhammed Najm in Beirut in summer 1965, he said that the literary figure, Fuad Dawwara, owns a stage copy of *Khatim Sulayman*.³²⁹ It would be an erroneous argument to dismiss these early plays and say, as Dawwara has done, that al-Hakim, as a writer, was still (prior to 1925) unaffected by European literature. Al-Hakim's travel to Paris nurtured an interest in Western literature which he was already developing.³³⁰

³²⁴ The question of what Badawi's philosophy or work can offer us today is one that can be a topic of interest and further investigation.

³²⁵ Al-Ahram Weekly Online, 29th August- 4 Sept. 2002, Issue No. 601.

³²⁶ See my literature review in appendix 2, p. 200.

³²⁷ El-Enany, Rasheed. "Tawfiq al-Hakim and the West: A New Assessment of the Relationship" *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Jstor. Vol. 27, No. 2 (Nov., 2000), pp. 165-175.

³²⁸ The authors of these French plays are unknown. On *The Groom* (*Al 'Ar'is*), critic, Muhammed Abd al-Majid Hilmi said, he did not like it because "it has been copied entirely from the French with only the names of the characters changed so that it is a European play in all its manners, events and meanings, but with its personages bearing Egyptian names." Fu'ad Dawwara, "Masrahiyaat Tawfiq al-Hakim al- Majhula", VIII, (May 1964) p. 60

³²⁹ See on Dawwara: <http://kfip.org/professor-mohammad-yousef-najm> (accessed 05/06/2014).

³³⁰ At the end of WWI, there was a dramatic surge of theatrical activities led by refugees from Syria and Lebanon, such as Marun Naqqash and George Abyad. The latter formed a group who used to stage al-Hakim's plays. Naqaash and Abyad were trained in Europe and chose to live in Egypt rather than in their own countries due to Turkish oppression. Also, in 1918, many European plays were translated and staged by amateur groups of Egyptian actors. See Tutungi, G. V. "Tawfiq al-Hakim and the West." Indiana University, 1966, pp. 15-17.

From these Western influences, I conclude that al-Hakim's philosophical doctrine of equilibrium promulgates his own individual experimentations with the existential ideas that he admired (this will become apparent in section III of this chapter). Although some may argue that he was simply following the fashion at the time (just as he himself admitted in respect of the plays that he wrote in his early career), in fact the contrary is true because the ideas he expressed in his early experimentations continued to develop in his later works and actually became more explicit. For example, the idea of seeking knowledge or truth, which he presented in his adaptation of Sophocles' *King Oedipus* in 1949, is one that emerged as an underlying theme in his *Equilibrium* in 1955 (as an inevitable necessity for struggle in order to uncover the unknown). Furthermore, the duality of good and evil and their relationship of dependence and correspondence, presented in his short story '*Ahd al-Shaytan*' in 1938, re-emerged more explicitly in his philosophical short stories *Arini Allah* in 1953. This supports the claim that the inspiration that al-Hakim found during the earlier period of his career continued to linger in his mind and form the basis for his doctrine of equilibrium.

Moreover, an important point to consider, and which is also worth noting here, is that Sartre's name was known in the Middle East not for his major oeuvre *Being and Nothingness* (1943), but for his articles in *Les Temps Modernes*. His major work was not translated into Arabic until 1966, but the fact that al-Hakim was educated in French makes it plausible that he had read Sartre's work in the original language. In fact, in a recent article titled "Auction Hall in Paris, presents rare letters written by misogynist Tawfiq al-Hakim to two French women",³³¹ it is claimed that one of the letters reveals the inspiration for al-Hakim's '*Awdat al- Wa'y*' as one that is due to al-Hakim's close relationship with Sartre and de Beauvoir. '*Awdat al- Wa'y*' was published after Nasser died and raised controversies as a result of al-Hakim's criticisms of Nasser's policies. The claim is that al-Hakim's book was inspired by a series of articles written by himself in French and published in Sartre's *Les Temps Modernes*. Al-Hakim criticises in these articles the absence of democracy and, upon Sartre and de Beauvoir's invitation, he expresses his views explicitly in the magazine. The letters show that there is a close friendship between the thinkers and that these articles became, later on, the subject of al-Hakim's book. They also support the claim that al-Hakim was communicating with Sartre in French and was

³³¹ Yousef, Ahmad. "Auction Hall in Paris presents rare letters written by misogynist Tawfiq al-Hakim to two French women" *al-Masry al- Youm* (National newspaper online), 30th April 2014, Paris. Not available in English.

also a respected fellow intellectual who enjoyed this international dialogue. Below is how the information in the letter appeared in the Egyptian article:³³²

و تكشف رسالة أخرى بينهما عن جذور كتاب «عودة الوعي» الذي أصدره توفيق الحكيم عقب وفاة الزعيم الراحل جمال عبدالناصر، وانتقد فيه بشدة غياب الديمقراطية في عهده وذلك بعرض سيمون دي بوفوار وسارتر على توفيق الحكيم كتابة مقال في المجلة الفرنسية الشهيرة لى تان مودرن Les Temps Modernes وهو المقال الذي تحول فيما بعد إلى كتاب «عودة الوعي»، والذي أثار صدوره ضجة هائلة في مصر والعالم العربى، اتهم فيها اليسار الكاتب الراحل بالنكوص عن مبادئ الاشتراكية وبالجحود لحرية التعبير التى كان الزعيم الراحل يسمح له بنشر أعمال أدبية تنتقد النظام مثل مسرحيتى «يا طالع الشجرة» و«الصفقة»، بالإضافة إلى كتابه الشهير «بنك القلق».

Besides this, and also in support of the claim that al-Hakim had read Sartre and that there was a dialogue between them, in 1965 al-Hakim published *Adab al-Hayah* (*The Literature of Life*), in which he included a chapter titled “A Response to Sartre”. There he quotes, at the beginning of the text, Sartre’s view that literature must reflect the struggle of the people and that this struggle should be the motive for social progress and for freedom. Al-Hakim explains that he heard this from Sartre. It is not implausible that it was said during a personal meeting or during a lecture given by Sartre in Cairo during the 1967 visit. Al-Hakim, in defending the role of Modern Arab literature, argues in his chapter that Modern Arab literature has always been fulfilling this distinct goal (i.e. using the nation’s struggle as a tool for progress and liberation). For example, he says, the *Yawmiyat Na’ib fi al-Aryaf* (*Diary of a Countryside Prosecutor*), as a work of Arabic literature, has been doing just that since the publication of his work in 1938, before Sartre’s name came to fame. He adds, when Sartre published sections of this novel in *Les Temps Moderne*, that he was fully aware that the novel reflected precisely these goals which he, Sartre, strongly believed in and wrote about; the work defends humanity against tyranny and calls for freedom and social progress.³³³ With this said, al-Hakim identifies in his “Response to Sartre” two different positions, his and Sartre’s in relation to France’s policies concerning war in Algeria.³³⁴

³³² The article presents information regarding other letters sent to al-Hakim which I will present in relevant parts of this thesis. One letter is from de Beauvoir following her visit to Egypt and the other letters are from the public regarding the attacks that al-Hakim received after the publication of *Arini Allah* in 1953.

³³³ The novel speaks of the struggle of the people in rural Egypt against a corrupt government.

³³⁴ Al-Hakim, Tawfiq. (1965) *Adab al-Hayah* (*The Literature of Life*). The letter to the French ambassador was published on 6th July 1947 in national newspapers. As a result, al-Hakim was not granted a visa to enter France when he wished to return to the country in 1949, until the Egyptian government intervened and threatened to apply

Moreover, the common belief among Arab scholars is that Dr. Taha Husayn,³³⁵ a fellow intellectual, was the first to introduce Sartre's articles to Egyptians in the form of public lectures and articles.³³⁶ Husayn was wary of Sartre's conception of "commitment" (*engagement*). The latter is apparent in Sartre's analysis of the relationship between the writer and society (post WWII). Husayn did not share with Sartre the view that "since writing is a consequential form of acting/being, intellectuals should assume political responsibility for their work and the circumstances that condition it."³³⁷ For example, in *The Age of Reason* (1945), Mathieu, Sartre's protagonist, says "My freedom is a burden to me; for years past I have been free, and to no purpose. I agree with you that no one can be a man who has not discovered something for which he is prepared to die."³³⁸ The idea of commitment as a "total submersion in the political", as Sartre proposed it to be,³³⁹ is one that neither appealed to Husayn nor to al-Hakim.³⁴⁰ By the late 50s, however, this idea rapidly became the basis for 'Sartrean existentialism' in Egypt to an extent where Arab scholars argued that it overshadowed Badawi's philosophy. Although al-Hakim was initially attracted to the culture of resistance that came along with existentialism and what it represented, he expressed in his doctrine of equilibrium a position that is different to some extent from the "two Sartrean choices of engaged/ progressive versus detached/reactionary."³⁴¹

In *Equilibrium*, al-Hakim speaks of the role of the intellectual whilst talking about the balance between the power of the ruler and the ruled as the conduit through which the power of the ruler manifests itself in an era of absolute authority.³⁴² What he puts forward as his first proposition is that there are two domains: the domain of thought and the domain of action. On the one hand, thought can drive an individual to take action (i.e. acts of personal development),

the same treatment to French citizens visiting Egypt. See appendix 1 for a translated passage from al-Hakim's chapter "al- rad 'ala Sartre" (A Response to Sartre)

³³⁵ Note that there is another Arabic translation of Goethe's *Faust* written by Taha Hussayn.

³³⁶ Husayn saw a clear message in Sartre's articles and, accordingly, spoke of the "Nahda" (the Renaissance) as a mid-nineteenth century project which covers the Arab experience of modernity, or "cultural modernization". See Di-Capua , p. 1070.

³³⁷ Ibid. "Although the philosophical concern of commitment was human freedom and authentic existence, its practical application was *something for which [one] is prepared to die.*" p. 1070.

³³⁸ Sartre, J. P. *The Age of Reason* (1945) trans. Eric Sutton (1947) New York, 2001 p. 122.

³³⁹ Sartre's political writings began after WWII. Pre-war works were apolitical and inward. Scholars seem to agree that the transition in his political thought is reflected by him replacing the term "consciousness" with the term "praxis" as an active term in his works.

³⁴⁰ Dr Husayn was not only al-Hakim's fellow intellectual, but was also a close friend and a fan of al-Hakim's work. In 1951, al-Hakim was appointed the director of the National library by Husayn who was the Minister of Education at the time.

³⁴¹ Di- Capua, p. 1070 Note that this is not true of the young al-Hakim who demonstrated in Egypt's 1919 revolution and who also was imprisoned for a few days for his political activities before his father intervened to help issue his release.

³⁴² *Equilibrium*, p. 31.

and on the other, action may succeed in suffocating thought (i.e. diversions that may hinder one from fulfilling one's ideas). He illustrates this as follows: if an isolated person on a deserted island is joined by another person, creating a small community where the two live side by side, "one stronger in action and the other stronger in thought",³⁴³ then one person will influence the other. In other words, there will be between the two persons a relationship of a conflict of interests which al-Hakim sees as leading to the result that "either action dominates thought and makes it submit to its will, or thought dominates action making it submit to its will."³⁴⁴ The same idea applies to bigger communities; there is a struggle (between the force of action and the force of thought) which is visible throughout the course of human history.³⁴⁵

If we ask how these two domains (i.e. duality between thought and action) are represented in a modern society, and how they are in conflict, we will find that those who represent the power of action are people who came to power to rule. These rulers, who represent the action force, have been elected by the people, whether as individuals or elected as representatives of a certain political party.³⁴⁶ Although this is a positive change in the political arena in many modern societies (as opposed, for example, to hereditary ruling or one forcefully seizing power), al-Hakim holds that it "has not changed the hidden feeling that action has towards thought. The power of action, represented in implementation, always hates and fears the power of thought, represented in criticism and guidance".³⁴⁷ In every era, al-Hakim adds, those who represent the power of action (the rulers) attempt to "oblige thought to obey." In *Equilibrium* (1955), he writes that an intellectual should remain "free" and must not join in any political organisation or follow any party's agenda lest he represents a single party's ideology. I will talk more about the latter in my concluding chapter, in which I shall defend al-Hakim's apolitical attitude in relation to the criticisms he received. It is not implausible that al-Hakim

³⁴³ *Equilibrium*, p. 208

³⁴⁴ Ibid

³⁴⁵ In the previous passage in the text, al-Hakim reminds his readers of how in the olden days kings and clergymen were in conflict (one represented action or authority and the other represented spiritual thought). This is true of the Islamic medieval period where kings wished to influence the clergy. It is also true that in "the era of royalty, when the clergy were the ones who criticised and guided the ruling of kings, the kings always strove to quiet the loud voices of dissent which were against their will. Sometimes they are willing and submitting, other times, they are threatened and afraid, and other times they seize forcibly spiritual power and declare that they are the true heads of religion." *Equilibrium*, p. 32

³⁴⁶ Al-Hakim is referring to the case of the free officer's movement in 1952 and how people chose their ruler from amongst themselves, meaning choosing former President Nasser as Egypt's leader. Although there are debates among historians and regional experts as to whether this movement is to be considered as a "revolution", for the purpose of my study, I will consider it to be so because it has led to major political and social reforms in the region.

³⁴⁷ Ibid. This is very true and relevant today to Egypt's intellectual arena where intellectuals are engulfed by the force of power, i.e. by government and society.

had discussed his stance with Sartre during their correspondence and explained to him that Egyptian writers' fear for themselves from organisations and governments. For example, after the assassination of Yusuf al-Seba'i (1917-1978),³⁴⁸ a fellow writer and head of al-Ahram newspaper (where al-Hakim worked), he sarcastically writes:

A writer must engage in politics or he is denounced a prisoner of his ivory tower or of his freedom of thought. The writer's betrayal carries different meanings. Influential writers are seen as traitors in their countries.³⁴⁹

From Sartre's perspective, the concept of "engagement" or commitment is not only a response to specific European realities at the time, but is also an objection to the passivity of his generation prior to the war. But al-Hakim, and Husayn, in Egypt, found no parallel circumstances to justify Sartre's idea (at least in this specific period).³⁵⁰ This, however, is not to deny that other writers,³⁵¹ such as Salama Musa,³⁵² embraced Sartre's concept of commitment and saw it as "a model for intellectual action which Sartre himself practised throughout his life."³⁵³ Husayn took up an apolitical stance and responded to Sartre's work *What is Literature?* (1949), by appealing to the notion of literature as 'art for art's sake'. This idea (art for art's sake) emerged as the focus of debate in the mid-50s as Husayn continued to disparage "committed literature".³⁵⁴

³⁴⁸ In 1953, the Egyptian short-story association was founded. It was led by Taha Husayn and Yusuf al-Seba'i was the secretary. "Tawfiq al-Hakim was one of the regular visitors at the association's Tahrir propositions. Also writer Yehia Haky and Ihsan 'Abd al-Quddus who was first to suggest the founding of the association to al-Siba'i", says Mahmoud Badawi. See Badawi, Mahmoud. "Memories unfolded" Magazine of Egyptian culture. No. 76, 1980. (January issue).

³⁴⁹ Al-Seba'i stressed in his writings the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and statehood. However, he was assassinated on February 18, 1978 by an extremist Palestinian group in Nicosia, Cyprus, where he was attending a conference dedicated to peace and security for the nations of the world. <http://samarkeolog.blogspot.com/2008/02/cyprus-1978-al-Seba'i-assassination.html> (accessed 07/03/2014).

³⁵⁰ This is on the basis that Egypt has a history of political engagements or revolutions (or revolutionary moments) as far as the sixteenth century as subject to the Ottoman rule, and later on to French and British rule in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. These often result in political order and constitutional dynamics.

³⁵¹ Abbas Mahmud al-'Aqqad's work showed on the one hand his objection to existentialism's individualism, and on the other, his praise for existentialism's focus on human freedom.

³⁵² Musa studied in France in 1907. He was exposed to a modern, secularized Europe and in the 1920s he formed a socialist party (soon dissolved). He continued his career as an active politician and was no stranger to a prison cell. During Nasser's regime, he remained an important figure and was appointed supervisor of the science section in *Akhbar al-Youm* (a newspaper founded in 1952 for which al-Hakim worked as a journalist). Musa held this position until his death in 1958. According to Di-Capua, Musa challenged Husayn by asking "what is the purpose of his writing and how does it serve humanity?" In 1945, he published *Freedom of Thought in Egypt* (a work which clearly shows how much he was influenced by European culture and in particular by Voltaire), and, amongst many of his publication, in 1961, he published *Literature to the Masses* (al-Adab lil-Sha'b).

³⁵³ Di-Capua, p. 1071.

³⁵⁴ This is a literary genre which Taha Husayn referred to as a burgeoning intellectual movement of "iltizam".

II.

To complement the images I presented in my previous chapter of al-Hakim, Sartre and de Beauvoir, I hope in this section, by investigating the relation between the doctrine of equilibrium and European existentialism (as a literary and philosophical movement), that I am able to shed light on some of the fundamental differences between al-Hakim and Sartre's views. It is, of course, not an easy task because what one can say of one existentialist may not be true of another. Nevertheless, I am relying in my investigation on al-Hakim's degrees of existentialism and the main areas of disagreement (taking into consideration also any common ground) between him and Sartre. It is worth noting that one must be wary of applying too rigidly existentialist characteristics to al-Hakim's doctrine because it lends itself to various interpretations as al-Hakim deliberately did not want to be tied down and so is purposely non-committal.

To clarify, my objectives in this section are as follows:

- (1) To draw a comparison between al-Hakim's and Sartre's conception of freedom and address the question of whether freedom is absolute or restricted according to these authors' doctrines.
- (2) To identify existentialist characteristics in al-Hakim's doctrine as manifested in his version of the play *Pygmalion*.

I would like to begin by suggesting that the general existential characteristics of al-Hakim's doctrine, which I shall describe, may be al-Hakim's reaction to reading the works of Western writers/philosophers who were affected by various historical movements. To mention a few that come to mind: the failure of the enlightenment project to live up to its promise; the rise of a counter-enlightenment as inspired by the works of Nietzsche; and the social, political and intellectual reforms of post-WWII France. Al-Hakim was open to Western ideas and beliefs (primarily, because of his upbringing and his French education and also because of his love for world literature). In his *Zahrat al-'Umr*, he admits, as part of his personal formation as a young Egyptian living abroad, he was keen to familiarise himself with Western culture, comparing and contrasting historical changes. Existentialism was one of the significant literary and philosophical movements that left a lasting effect on the young al-Hakim's character. The extent of this effect is evident in how he incorporates existential themes in his drama and in his equilibrium doctrine.

It is questionable whether al-Hakim's examinations of the ontology of being, being-for-others or the extent of human freedom, situate him strictly among the "Godly" existentialists or the "ungodly" ones. Al-Hakim approached such investigations with restless, wondering eyes. Self-contradictory, he on the one hand criticises religion's rigidity and its inability to provide us, humans, with firm answers, while on the other hand adapting what seems to be a religious tone, calling for one to maintain "faith". Al-Hakim's relationship with existentialism began with his readings of French existentialist authors and with his attending plays during visits to Paris. He was unaware that existentialism would have such a profound influence on him and turn out to be an important movement that would also influence literature, the arts, philosophy, theology and the social sciences. For one to learn about existentialism, to an extent where one is able to incorporate it (or some of its features at least) in one's own doctrine, surely requires thorough investigations and experimentations with existential ideas. From his autobiography and letters, it is evident that he undertook during this period, extensive mental exercises and readings before finally sitting down and putting together what he calls his own doctrine of equilibrium. Regardless of the simplicity of *Equilibrium* as a text, in terms of its style of narrative and informality, it still is fair to say that it is the most comprehensive work which reflects directly the influence of existential thought on al-Hakim. Unfortunately, he does not explicitly say much about this influence. Instead, he mentions the sheer amount of readings he had undertaken as part of his belief that it was his duty to do so.³⁵⁵ The results of this appear as works that reflect a stream of consciousness more than anything else.³⁵⁶ Let us now look at how he approached some of the fundamental issues that Sartre (and more generally, other Western thinkers) dealt with.

III.

The Issue of Freedom

*"I am a prisoner in what I have inherited, free in what I have acquired."*³⁵⁷

Man is free in his own direction until an external force intervenes; I sometimes call this 'divine forces'. Thus, the freedom of the human will, to me, is chained exactly like the freedom of movement of matter. The chaining of freedom is a notion that does not appeal to the majority of Europeans today because, as I

³⁵⁵ One can clearly grasp the scope of his dedication and effort from the sheer amount of names of both Eastern and Western authors which he read and commented on their work. His comments appear in his autobiographical essays and memoirs, *Sijn al- 'Umr* and *Zahrat al- 'Umr*.

³⁵⁶ He spent hours in silence in solitude thinking; whether in Cairo's cafes or at his desk at home, or at his office, which gradually led critics to claim that he was an author living in "il- burj il- 'agi" (an ivory tower).

³⁵⁷ See al-Hakim's *Sijn al- 'Umr*

said, they have given too much credence to the mind, to science, and to thought which, only deifies the human being in this universe.³⁵⁸

Al-Hakim was fascinated by Sartre's idea of freedom to an extent where he attempted to integrate it in his own equilibrium doctrine. The question whether his attempt is a successful one or not is something for readers to decide. To begin, in order to pave the way for his investigation of the subject of freedom, he puts forward two fundamental questions in his doctrine. These questions are "Are we *alone* in the universe? And are we *free* in the universe?" The first question he answers, based on observations and investigations from nature and from examples extracted from our daily lives, that we are not alone. It is due to materialism and the dominance of the human mind in various fields of science that we believe that we are Gods of this universe. This, he holds, is a result of the extensive knowledge that we acquired over the past years which affects how we see ourselves and how we feel about our existence. He writes, "The human being is alone in this universe without a competitor; he is the God of this existence with ultimate freedom."³⁵⁹ The denial of the other, or of the idea of the superior being's existence, in his view, has led us to believe exclusively in the power of the mind, i.e. rational thinking. We, accordingly, assume a freedom which is, in truth, not absolute but restricted. We, he explains, have "defined the concept of [our] freedom according to [our] freedom of thought and rejected anything that cannot be proved by research and experimentation, hence denying another will other than the human will, or the existence of another being."³⁶⁰

Through a comparison between us and other creatures, in addressing the question of whether freedom is absolute or restricted, he claims, through an analogy, that all non-human creatures are bound by an innate knowledge of their own purpose and function in life. "[It is] an obligation that is devoid of freedom".³⁶¹ We, humans, on the other hand, are born free and unbound, left to choose our own course. Our unique experience of life is primarily defined by our choices and actions, which is a view that al-Hakim as well as Sartre share in common. Embracing Sartre's *la force des choses* (the power of circumstances), al-Hakim in his equilibrium doctrine asserts his belief that our purpose in life is "unknown and undefined". This is contrary to the Quranic teachings about "the predestined life" where everything has already been willed by God.³⁶² Al-Hakim speaks of how human freedom remains in motion in

³⁵⁸ *Equilibrium*, p.23

³⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p.18

³⁶⁰ *Ibid*.

³⁶¹ *Ibid*. p. 21

³⁶² There are ongoing debates in Islam on predestination which raise questions regarding fate, God's omniscience and religious determinism which show how they are incompatible with paradox of human free will.

its course unless an external force intervenes. This is the first time that al-Hakim puts forward that although we are born free, unbound (and that, for example, a child's behaviour in life is the only determining factor), he quickly acknowledges that "our freedom is affected by direct or indirect external conflicting or resisting wills."³⁶³ When one asks what he meant by the latter, one finds no specific answer in his text other than the remark that these "external wills" are collective forces. By looking at his dramatic works, these forces, or "resisting wills", present themselves as death, age, and knowledge of the truth. He admits that the latter view is one that will not appeal to Western thought. He writes:

Europeans have given too much credence to the mind, to science and to thought which deifies the human being in this universe.³⁶⁴

The concept of fate and determinism is deeply rooted in Eastern Islamic thought. This is an issue I would like to identify as problematic for the process of introducing al-Hakim's conception of freedom to the West. On the one hand, al-Hakim's ideas about freedom have close links with the idea of fate. This has also been evident in debates concerning "free will" which occupied the minds of Christian theologians, such as Augustine and, in the later stages of the Enlightenment, Hobbes, Spinoza, and Locke. With this said, al-Hakim's belief namely that we have an extent of freedom and that our freedom is restricted by external forces may still appeal, generally speaking, to others, on the basis that such a belief may bring comfort to one's anxieties concerning the reality of one's free will. On the other hand, Sartre's conception of freedom as presented in *Being and Nothingness* (1943) has seen a shift. Sartre began to recognise in 1944 his obligation to involve himself politically. Busche writes "the shift was not simply one from thought to action, but one which involves a new understanding of consciousness, situation, freedom and Others."³⁶⁵ In "Sartre by himself", Sartre claims that "there is no question that there are some basic changes in the concept of freedom. I still, however, remained faithful to the notion of freedom."³⁶⁶ His understanding of freedom became shaped by his recognition of solidarity and social relationships. In an interview, he says: "I abandoned my pre-war individualism and the idea of pure individual and adapted the social individual and socialism. That was the turning point of my life: before and after."³⁶⁷ This means

³⁶³ *Equilibrium*, p.22

³⁶⁴ *Ibid*

³⁶⁵ Busche, Thomas. W. (1990) *The Power of Consciousness and the Force of Circumstances in Sartre's Philosophy* Indiana University Press. p. 58

³⁶⁶ "Sartre by himself" (1977) tr. Sartre: un film réalisé / par Alexandre Astruc, et Michel Contat. By Richard Seaver. New York: Urizen Books, 1978.

³⁶⁷ "Self-Portrait at Seventy" tr. of "Autuportrait à soixante- dix ans" (1976) by Paul Auster and Lydia Davis. In *Life/Situations: Essays written and spoken*. New York: Pantheon Books (1977)

that the understanding of freedom which begins with one's responsibility towards others, as held by al-Hakim in 1955, is one that is influenced by Sartre's understanding of freedom after WWII. The extent of political involvement and social responsibility, however, of al-Hakim and Sartre differed. To clarify, while al-Hakim chose to engage himself with society's issues from behind his desk (through his writings), Sartre took a proactive role.

The *Equilibrium* is not the only text that put forward the view that we have an extent of freedom and that our freedom is restricted by external forces. Al-Hakim's *Fann al-Adab* also presents (indirectly) this idea to the readers. The human condition is one where we live a tragic existence. This is a concept inspired by Greek tragedies. Al-Hakim adapts it and implements it in his philosophical doctrine, as well as being a recurrent theme in his literary works. Initially, the claim he maintains is that we are (as existentialists also hold) left to our own devices in this world to make our own choices in life. This is not to say that he agrees fully with Sartre's idea that our freedom is absolute; on the contrary, he explains that freedom of choice is always accompanied by a great sense of "responsibility". al-Hakim's message, in a nutshell, is (initially agreeing with Sartre) that we are indeed free to make choices in life, but that these choices are all made within a framework which is beyond us, and are unable to grasp. An example to clarify his point is this: if an individual is left in a room to choose from a bowl of a selection of fruits, regardless of the free will that this person has to make his own choices, these choices are limited by the sheer fact that the bowl of fruit has already been arranged in a certain way and left in the room for the person to choose from. In using this analogy, one understands that our freedom is not absolute. We are free to make choices, but these choices are restricted, in actual fact, by something that we have no control over or can change. And, in al-Hakim's view, "we live, desire and strive within a frame of divine will. This will, that sometimes reveals itself to humans in hidden images in the form of barriers and chains, should be overcome through struggle."³⁶⁸ Could al-Hakim be influenced by Sartre's "facticity" in relation to one's freedom? Al-Hakim, like Sartre, feels that one's place, body, past, position, and fundamental relationship to the Other are among the limitations that are placed upon one's freedom (in Sartrean terms; they are among the "facticities" of freedom). Al-Hakim says "I am a prisoner in what I have inherited, free in what I have acquired." Is it right to understand that modern man (as Sartre claims) is *condemned* to be free with complete responsibility over his freedom?

Moreover, for al-Hakim, the examination of freedom did not stop at the proposition that existence preceded essence. But unlike Sartre, the comparisons between us and other creatures

³⁶⁸ *Equilibrium*. p. 23

concerning the question of whether freedom is absolute or restricted led him to argue that although we are free to make mistakes, decisions and choices, our freedom is ultimately restricted. Our freedom is constrained by “others’ wills” that conflict with our own. By “others’ wills”, he means not only the wills of other individuals or the collective wills in society’s customs and norms, but also a divine will that is capable of changing the course of one’s life. He says that, at times, our freedom seem to us as absolute but that we then find out that it is restricted when unexplainable incidents happen. He writes:

You attempt to link it to a coincidence, but you fail because an external will has intervened in an orderly manner emanating from an awareness that is conscious of what it does and knows what it wants, in order to provoke specific results that would not have happened were it not for this unexpected external intervention.³⁶⁹

To clarify the latter passage, al-Hakim says that when a specific incident occurs in one’s life, one tends to try and find a rational explanation for its occurrence. This attempt is not always a successful one because some incidents occur as a result of the intervention of a superior will which leads to specific results that change the course of one’s life (the change may have not occurred otherwise). Although for the sake of argument, this proposition would have benefited from further explanation by al-Hakim or examples in support of his claim (that some incidents in our lives have no rational explanations because they occur as a result of the intervention of a superior will), we, the readers, are given none. Instead, he concludes by saying that although the human mind naturally desires to explain these incidents using logic, it fails. The reason is that because although we are rational, we are impotent beings who strive within a frame of a divine will. He writes:

Nowadays, the case of human freedom, as an individual or as a group, agrees and converges over the same conclusion: the denial of God and the denial of hidden powers that affect human destiny. My feeling towards man’s impotence against the forces that affect his fate is not due to pessimism. And I do not see in European theories on human freedom from fate anything that calls for optimism. The contrary is correct.³⁷⁰

The claim that one must struggle with others’ wills or with what al-Hakim refers to as ‘hidden or unknown forces’ is one that shows his view that man is impotent in the face of his destiny. Optimistically, he explains this to be an incentive for hard work and struggle, and not for procrastination. The image that we begin with in *Equilibrium*, where “deifying man alone

³⁶⁹ *Equilibrium*, p.22

³⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p.23

on earth is one of the reasons that led to today's world disasters",³⁷¹ has quickly been replaced with a positive view in regards of human struggle as an incentive for progress or transcendence.³⁷² I would like, accordingly, to raise a few questions: How was the latter view translated or presented in al-Hakim's philosophical works and in his drama? And how was the notion of striving against others' wills portrayed and, more importantly, how was "man's impotence in front of his destiny" really an incentive for hard work as al-Hakim urges us to believe? Did his protagonists tragically lead themselves to their end (perhaps, in vain)? Or are they perfect examples that embody the existential characteristics in al-Hakim's thought? Let us look at al-Hakim's play *Pygmalion* in order to find some answers to these questions. But before doing so, there are a few things that I should raise for us to consider (also, as reminders of the logic behind al-Hakim's doctrine of equilibrium).

Firstly, in *Equilibrium*, al-Hakim explicitly claims that due to the widespread practice of materialism in the modern age and the extent of human achievements, man "desires to be God". Sartre also writes of this desire in *Being and Nothingness*³⁷³ and also in *Notebooks for an Ethics*.³⁷⁴ He suggests the need to free oneself from being-necessary-God project and to accept our "for-itself" as a contingent God in that it is the sole creator of values. The concern here is not the second part of the claim as it is the first in which Sartre speaks of an inevitable "necessary-God-project". The choices for Sartre are either that an individual (1) strive in a project that is doomed to fail, or (2) accept that he is the creator of his own values (meaning, that God is missing and the for-itself is the only God). One may argue that, in either case, Sartre is choosing to be God because he is either striving to be eternal and necessary in-itself-for-itself, or accepting his fate to be the contingent God of his own world as a for-itself. Was al-Hakim affected by Sartre's claims and this religious bareness? And how does this "desire to be God" present itself in the *Equilibrium* and other writings regardless of how the idea contradicts the teachings of Islam?³⁷⁵ Is it possible that al-Hakim, as Hutchins claims, has adapted yet again a "what-if" approach in this scenario? The relationship between the creature and the creator seems to be one that occupies al-Hakim's mind. Here are examples from *Equilibrium* where he claims that the modern man is one who has already assumed such a role:

³⁷¹ Ibid.

³⁷² To be understood as an act of rising above a present condition to better oneself and develop.

³⁷³ pp.797-98

³⁷⁴ pp.478-79

³⁷⁵ It can also be asked if it does not also raises criticisms and speculations regarding his belief and faith.

The new age indeed provided an answer by showing us that the human being is alone in this universe without a competitor; *he is the God* of this existence with ultimate freedom.³⁷⁶

The human being, who is free and *God-like*, with no companion and not ruled by fate, denying the presence of another on earth and all powers other than his own, did not find guidance for his war drives and struggles aside from himself, so he turned on himself, fighting and destroying his own being.³⁷⁷

The idea that human beings are considered deities by themselves or by others is one that existed in Ancient Egypt and was depicted in Pharaonic art. Pharaohs were kings who were also considered Gods by the Egyptian culture. Titles such as the hawk (God Horus), the vulture (Goddess Nekhbet), and the cobra-Goddess (Wadjet), associated them with the characteristics of these animals. Egyptians believed that when a Pharaoh died, he would continue to rule them in the after-life (which explains the grand burial and preparations). The idea of “deification” is not limited only to the Pharaohs, but also appeared in Greek Mythologies (mortal born heroes such as Hercules elevated to divinity) and is also present in Christian theology (i.e. Virgin Mary). This idea, deification, plays no role in Islam and is against Islamic teachings. This, in fact, did not limit the scope of al-Hakim’s experimentations with this idea in his drama and in *Equilibrium* (as shown above) he blames the change that came with the birth of modern societies as a negative influence on people’s attitude and behaviour towards their freedom and status as beings in the universe. He, however, sees that even “the prophets of the East were sent by God and were challenged by obstacles put in their way”, which means that regardless of one’s status, one is destined to struggle to fulfil one’s being. He adds:

A prophet’s path is not paved; he strives to deliver his message in the midst of impediments in the form of people’s desires. Nowadays, the case of human freedom agrees and converges on the same conclusion: the denial of God and the denial of the hidden powers that affect human destiny.³⁷⁸

In al-Hakim’s dramatic works, whether plays or short stories, there is a recurrent theme which shows that there is a relationship between the creator and the creation. Images in Pharaonic art depicts offerings given to Pharaohs by the people as a sign of their love and worship. A distinct image from ancient Egyptian mythology shows a strong link between the sky, or the heavens, and the Earth.³⁷⁹ The image (below) captures what may have inspired al-

³⁷⁶ *Equilibrium*, p .18

³⁷⁷ Ibid, p. 24.

³⁷⁸ Ibid, p. 23

³⁷⁹ Nut (the sky) and her husband, Gab (the Earth) opposite one another, meet every evening when Nut comes down to meet Gab, causing darkness. See Egyptian myths of Nut and Gab.

Hakim in regards of (1) the relationship between the heavens and the earth and (2) the relationship between evil and darkness (as presented in *Izis* and, as a theory, in *Equilibrium*). Al-Hakim, thus, found inspiration for his “creature-creator” idea in myths in which he used to build upon his characters such as in *Izis* (1955).³⁸⁰



IV.

Existential Estrangements in al-Hakim's *Pygmalion*

The conflict between the creature and the creator is one that presents itself clearly in al-Hakim's version of *Pygmalion*. Al-Hakim holds that human will is on one hand, and the divine, or Godly will, is on the other. Between the two is a relationship of resistance, rebellion and continuous opposition. He explains that the existential conflict that he sees in Pygmalion's announcement that Venus has failed to grant life to Galatia in Act three,³⁸¹ is in reality, Pygmalion's own failure. This is because the creature (in this case, Pygmalion), is “the evidence to the existence of the creator and his genius”.³⁸² If one is to be defeated, the other is defeated as well and vice versa. The imbalance that is evident in this relationship emerges when Pygmalion wishes to “infiltrate into the borders of the other.” This is also true on the Gods' part: they interfere and tamper with the creatures' affairs and thus, add further to the tension and imbalance in this relation. Apollo expresses that “the war between us [creators] and him

³⁸⁰ Note that *Izis* is published at the same time as *Equilibrium*, both in 1955. Hutchins says “al-Hakim went beyond the Bible story to the Egyptian Goddess Isis, who is clearly not an approved Muslim source for guidance. He refers to this Goddess in other works as ‘*Awdat al-Ruh*, *al-Ribat al-Muqaddas*, and *Shahrazad*. The heroines are all *Izis* figures.” See Hutchins' *A Readers' Guide*, p.99.

³⁸¹ See al-Hakim's own adaptation of the play *Pygmalion* published in 1942. Also see *Masir Sirsar* (*The Fate of the Cockroach*) where he shows individualism and a representation of *le force de choses*.

³⁸² See Khoury, p. 209.

[creature] is always with alternate success and the situation will never be different.”³⁸³ Yet, from another perspective, Pygmalion is similarly the “creator” of Galatia. His powers parallel those of the Gods in their interference with his affairs when he himself crosses the border between him, the creator, and his creation, Galatia. Nevertheless, in the concluding act of this play, in both cases, Pygmalion’s and the Gods’, they recognise the abyss between them and their creation and the imbalance that they have caused. Their creations originate from their need to “assert their existence”. Thus, in the relationship between the human will and the Godly will, there should always be separation and resistance of engulfment or “crossing of borders” by one another, even though the play shows that this has not successfully occurred between all parties involved in the relationships portrayed, i.e. Pygmalion climbs up to the Gods and wishes to be with Galatia, and the Gods interfere with his affairs by descending to earth.

Another interesting aspect of this play that should be noted here is that al-Hakim shows that the “created creator”, Pygmalion, is more privileged in status than the “non-created creator”, i.e. Apollo and Venus. This is because Pygmalion is always in a *dynamic* state which is the nearest level to equilibrium and, thus, often appears to be in a superior position. He is able to rise upward, ascend higher than himself, or descend to identify with his creation, Galatia. To clarify, Pygmalion is able to rise to the position of the Gods when he created Galatia, and in doing so he transcends himself. And at the same time, he is able, as a creature created by the Gods, to also identify with Galatia’s nature and beauty as a fellow human being. Al-Hakim has supported his claim that human struggle against the Gods is actually a positive motive for one to exert more effort in the hope to excel or triumph. I would like to assert though that the end result never really concerned al-Hakim. It is true that his protagonists usually lead themselves to their tragic ends, but in the process they exert extreme effort and show an extensive struggle and resistance against all odds and hindrances facing them in order to carry on. Could this be the key to answering the above questions or the key needed for us, the readers of al-Hakim, to unlock his imbalanced equilibrium and to having a better understanding and appreciation of his equilibrium doctrine?

Finally, in concluding this section, an interesting aspect that intrigues me in the discussion of the play given by Khoury in his article³⁸⁴ is the structure of “undulation and

³⁸³ Ibid p. 67, footnote.

³⁸⁴ Khoury, Jerjes, N. (2007) “Al-Hakim’s Equilibrium under the microscope. A study in al-Hakim’s Philosophy through his plays”, p.191 *Arabica*, T.54, Fasc.2. Apr., 2007 T. 54, pp. 189-219. www.brill.nl. See also <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4057813>, pp. 195- 196.

identification”, by which he means an “alternate descent and ascent” present in al-Hakim’s *Pygmalion*.³⁸⁵ In this play, we have the artist’s declaration of art over life and his victory over the God, but suddenly this turns into Pygmalion’s submitting his art to the Gods and Venus offering it life, which, accordingly, in effect represents victory for the Gods. Al-Hakim shows that victory on both sides is provisional; perhaps he says this in order to pave the way to claiming that Pygmalion’s freedom of choice is also a provisional one (similar to pleasure gained from human achievements). Moreover, Venus and Apollo’s relationship in this play is one of counterbalance. The two Gods meet and agree through Galatia. Khoury adds, “God and humans met through the same character which was *man-made*, but its life and wisdom was from the Gods.”³⁸⁶ Both Gods here are involved in the same “project”; namely, Galatia, and they are assessed by Pygmalion, who declares their failure and asks them to return things to the way they used to be. From here, there is a relation of “undulations and descends”. Al-Hakim writes:

Venus: We are only prisoners to this self. Aren’t you the one who said that Pygmalion was able to do what we were not? Thus, he ascended higher than his self and destroyed its walls when he created.³⁸⁷

Even though the Gods have withdrawn the life they gave Galatia and their wisdom, Pygmalion falls into sorrow and despair over his creation. The act closes by coming full circle: it takes us back to the first act with its still tableau of Pygmalion, kneeling on one knee, staring at his creation, Galatia. Through this method of ascending and descending, advancing and retreating, and the characters’ dynamic conflicting powers, al-Hakim almost “tests” the effectiveness of his doctrine by showing possible treatments of his proposed problem of “emotional and intellectual” imbalance. This method could be seen, as Mahmud Amin al-‘lim argues, as an equilibrium that is rather “an illusory point which these powers aspire to realise”,³⁸⁸ but fail to do so. It is “resistance and conflict” between forces in opposition (and not an act of balance per se) that is the true essence of al-Hakim’s equilibrium doctrine.

If we consider that al-Hakim’s philosophical ideas³⁸⁹ are presented in the form of his experimentations with existentialist ideas put forward by Sartre or others, then he has

³⁸⁵ Also present in al-Hakim’s work, *Praksa*.

³⁸⁶ Khoury, p. 212.

³⁸⁷ Al-Hakim’s *Pygmalion*, p. 102

³⁸⁸ M. al- ‘alim, *Tawfiq al- Hakim Mufakiran wa Fannan* (transl. *al-Hakim Thinker and Artists*), Cairo. Dar Sahdi lil- Nashr, 1985, p. 160, Also in Khoury’s article, p. 214

³⁸⁹ These are understood to be inspired by direct and indirect sources that interested him in different stages of his life.

succeeded in doing just that, and as a result, we have a genre that is new to the East; namely, philosophical narratives. In an ideal world, the divine will and the human will are in accordance and in counterbalance with one another. But the reality of the situation is that we are confronted with situations that we do not understand and over which we have no control. The relationship of relentless imbalance is, thus, at the heart of equilibrium. Could this be the main reason for our ‘tragic’ existence in accordance with others, society and the universe? Is it a case of having a restricted freedom and a determined destiny?³⁹⁰

³⁹⁰ Al-Hakim’s concept of destiny does *not* have a cause and effect influence on the choices made because these choices, regardless of their extent or how varied they were from one another, seem to have been all within God’s divine knowledge. “The case of predestination or freewill was best turned over to scientists; he was convinced that human existence is bounded by divine snares like traps set out to catch foxes.” See *Plays, Prefaces and Postscripts of T, al-Hakim*, 2nd vol. Tr. and Ed W.M. Hutchins (Washington, D. C: Three Continents Press, 1981) I, 281, 287.

CHAPTER FOUR

CRITICISMS

In this chapter, I hope it will become evident to readers that al-Hakim is a writer who was misunderstood by many. Through my examinations of common criticisms against al-Hakim, my hope is to defend al-Hakim from common criticisms and to spark readers' interest and curiosity to wish to enquire further about him as a writer and a philosopher. Contrary to the reputations assigned to his name (i.e. living in an ivory tower,³⁹¹ a misogynist and a miser), al-Hakim was very much engaged in the problems of his society and addressed the issues that occupied the minds of many intellectuals of his time. He spoke highly of the role of Egyptian women in society and went out of his way to show excellent hospitality towards his guests.³⁹² Regardless of all his efforts, his reputation remained unchanged. Issues that al-Hakim wrote regularly about were, but not limited to, the absence of the role of women from the positions of power in the Egyptian society, the lack of balance between religion (represented by the clerics and Islamic establishments) and reason (here, represented by the intellectuals) and, broadly, the social, cultural and political restraints affecting the Arab mind. The conflict between religion and reason is one that developed as a result of fierce debates sparked by influential clerics (i.e. Shaykh 'abd al-Hamid Kishk and Shaykh Motwali al-Sha'rawy) and al-Azhar. First, I will discuss the debates regarding the role of the philosopher or the intellectual in his society and the role of philosophy and its use to the Arab world. Next, in the following section, I will explain al-Hakim's position in relation to the attacks by clerics and the opposition he faced.

I.

The Arab intellectual finds himself at the end of the twentieth century obliged to engage in a debate which Arab intellectuals had almost, at the end of the nineteenth century, been able to conclude in favour of reason and progress.³⁹³

The idea that philosophers have no role to play in their societies is one that has been identified and debated by Egyptian intellectuals of that specific period (from 1950s to late 1980s). Debates became fierce as it engaged, on the one hand, clerics and Islamic

³⁹¹ This is a reputation that was assigned to his name as an indication of elitism and not engaging with society or others.

³⁹² Personal letters by al-Hakim or directed to his publisher. They can be found in *Tawfiq al--Hakim Reminiscences*, ed. *Gamal al-Ghitani*. Cairo: Supreme Council of Culture, 1998. p183.

³⁹³ This is a 1987 interview with Egyptian liberalist philosopher, Fuad Zakariyya on philosophy in the Muslim world. See Nusseibeh, S. "The Arab World: What role for philosophy?" Al Quds University, lecture notes, Paris 24th January, 2011 <http://sari.alquds.edu/doc/philosophy1.pdf> (accessed 03/06/2014).

establishments of al-Azhar, and on the other hand, intellectuals and writers. Clerics, such as Keshk and Sha'rawy, played a leading role in these debates, as well as a few members of the public and colleagues. They were displeased with what intellectuals, like Mahfouz and Idris and, most importantly, al-Hakim, began to communicate to the public. I consider al-Hakim fortunate in that he died of old age rather than of an extremist's act to personally cause harm to him.³⁹⁴ Since the publication of al-Hakim's *Arini Allah* in 1953, the criticisms began,³⁹⁵ but in varied degrees. They were, in my view, less apparent during Nasser's reign (because he seems to have protected to some extent al-Hakim)³⁹⁶ than they were during Sadat's and during the "awakening of Islam" movement in the 70s.³⁹⁷ I will speak more of the latter shortly. And as I previously mentioned, one cannot overlook the fact that the divide between the older generation of writers and the new generation of writers and intellectuals, like Al 'alim, began to marginalise the old-guard intelligentsia. The attacks were on the basis that the older generation represent the elite class and hence, are hardly engaged in societies' problems. This attitude led to frictions in the intellectual arena and, equally, affected al-Hakim's reputation and readership. This was in addition to debates with clerics, which is why al-Hakim is portrayed as an outsider in the midst of political and social imperfections.

³⁹⁴ Intellectuals like Nasser Hamid Abu Zeid (liberalist theologian known for his project on humanistic Quran and hermeneutics) suffered religious persecution for his views on the Quran. He was declared an apostate (*murtadd*) by an Egyptian court, denied academic appointments and had his marriage annulled on the condition that a Muslim woman cannot marry an apostate (according to the *hisbah* principles- Islamic doctrine- stated in Article 89 and 110 of the Regulations Governing Sharia Courts. Also Mahfouz was a victim of an attempt to kill him after the publication of his work *Awlad Haratna (Children of the Alley)*, first published in 1959, which is blacklisted in Arab countries. Islamist Salafist spokesman, Abdel Mon'eim al-Shahat said it encourages prostitution and depicts God (blasphemous). Writer, Farag Foudah received threats and was killed. See on Mahfouz's incident: <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/5/32/28575/Arts--Culture/Film/Film-critic-rebukes-media-silence-after-Islamist-a.aspx> (accessed 23/08/2014).

³⁹⁵ Islamist Anwar al-Gendy criticised *Ahl al-Kahf* in 1932 and said that Islam knows no mythical stories or legends. This criticism did not affect al-Hakim's reputation at this stage much and the work continued to be published and even translated to foreign languages.

³⁹⁶ It is said that Nasser, to a great extent, protected al-Hakim from others who disapproved of his writings that criticized the policies of Nasser himself and the role of the socialist party. Nasser listened more to al-Hakim's advice than the advice of other writers. It is believed that when Nasser was in university, he read '*Awdat al-Ruht*' by al-Hakim and was affected by the book and al-Hakim's predictions regarding the nation's need for a leader who is loved by the people and who will unify them. This is said to have inspired Nasser and that he saw himself as this leader. See *Tawfiq al-Hakim Reminiscences*, ed. *Gamal al-Ghitani*. Cairo: Supreme Council of Culture, 1998. P.183.

³⁹⁷ According to an article by Yasser Hegazy, al-Hakim engaged in intellectual debates in the late 40s with Shaykh al-Maraghy of al-Azhar and with Mustafa al-Nahas, leader of al-Wafd party. And in the 70s, he engaged in debates with the leftist party after the publication of '*Awdat al-Wa'y*' and his last debate, and the most damaging to his reputation, was the debate with the clerics, Shaykh Sha'rawy and Keshk, regarding matters which relate directly to Islamic doctrine and to the interpretation of the Quran. These began on the 1st of March 1983 with the publication of his series of articles in al-Ahram, *Hadith ma'a Allah*, and lasted for four weeks. See Hegazy, Yasser. (2009) *Tawfiq al-Hakim wa hadith ma'a Allah* The Union of Arab lawyers' webpage. <http://www.Mohamoon-montada.com/default.aspx?action=DISPLAY&id=90737&Type=3>

The view, however, that I would like to put forward in defence of al-Hakim is that he lived a life of “engagement”, not the sort of engagement described by Sartre in the strictest sense, but as a “responsible” equilibrist aware of his state of being in society and aware of his responsibilities towards “the other”. And accordingly, his freedom is ultimately restrained by “the sum of direct and indirect forces” that exists all around him. Let us imagine, if al-Hakim were alive today, what his position would be in the light of current national and international affairs. In Egypt, he would see a nation’s neglect of philosophy and philosophers. The few intellectuals whose names today shine in the media face attacks and criticisms, once again from clerics, and fanatics in the public eye, who persistently discredit voices other than their own. The attacks from clerics on writers and intellectuals, via Egyptian newspapers or on television, have become socially acceptable (with or without justification) to an extent where, in most cases, they become personal battles against one cleric and one intellectual rather than one of them having something meaningful to communicate.³⁹⁸ Other forms of opposition, which are hostile to unfamiliar ideas, and which may or may not add something beneficial to these debates, often disregard ideologies as instruments of change. What is, therefore, lacking is an objective intellectual arena where an intellectual or a philosopher can engage with a universal intellectual community, and connect with it in a meeting of minds.³⁹⁹ This, I believe, is one of the issues that al-Hakim would have addressed had he been alive today.⁴⁰⁰

An opposing view to one that promotes the philosopher who engages with society, is one that shows that a true philosopher ought to live in isolation. To clarify any misunderstanding, al-Hakim’s only objection to joining a political party was his belief that if one joins a party, one is restricted and bound by this party’s agenda and by what this party represents. An intellectual, he thinks, must continue to have freedom of thought enabling him to criticise, analyse and freely observe without prejudice or bias. Critics who accused al-Hakim of “living in an ivory tower”⁴⁰¹ should see him as a philosopher who, although at times he was

³⁹⁸ See the case of journalist and satirist, Bassem Yusuf, in my next paragraphs.

³⁹⁹ This is the conclusion of a survey of proceedings of the 12th Philosophical conference organised by the Egyptian philosophical association in the year 2000 in Cairo around the theme of “Philosophy in the Arab world”.

⁴⁰⁰ In his *Thawrat al- Shabab (The Youths’ Revolution)* published in 1983, he predicts a similar revolution to that of January 2011 and identifies some of the social problems that affected Egyptians over the past years, such as illiteracy, poor education and our relationship with neighbouring countries and many others.

⁴⁰¹ Al-Hakim wrote a series of essays, titled “*Min- il borj il- ‘agi*” (*From the Ivory tower*) in 1943, addressing the absence of the role of women from the positions of power in the Egyptian society in relation to the role of the writer, creativity and inspiration. Critics took this title and used it against him to claim that he was living a life of “detachment” and isolation from society and from society’s problems, a view I strongly disagree with.

as retiring as a solitary writer,⁴⁰² he was constantly addressing the problems of the people and engaged in society's problems. If we ask, today, about the Arab predicament, our answer will, loosely, parallel that of al-Hakim's in the 1950s. In a recent interview with Muhammed Rifa'at,⁴⁰³ the latter says that the problems that face the Arab world today, and in particular Egypt, can be resolved by introducing "empirical thought", in the sense that we need to derive our knowledge from experiments and observations rather than depend solely on theory. One of the most important problems of the 21st century's, Rifa'at adds, is in the rigidity of an educational system that does not allow for creativity or experimentation. In his view, the second most important problem, also interwoven with the problem of education, is religion (as it is understood today). In the past, religion has been used as an opposing force (with a hidden agenda) against the freedom of thought and the expression of ideas. Today, unfortunately, it is still used by influential figures and clerics, for the same purpose.⁴⁰⁴ This view corresponds with the views expressed by prominent intellectuals in Egypt during the past few years. For example, Bassem Yusuf writes:⁴⁰⁵

Before the 1970s, the so-called "satellite clerics" did not exist. When I was in primary school, I remember there were these audio cassettes sold in front of mosques. They were full of fatwas (religious edicts). It went something like this: "This is prohibited because it's heresy. That is prohibited because it is misleading." And in the end, everything ends up in hell. Those born in the 1970s like me remember this phase. During our teenage years (in the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s), the current satellite stars were stars on cassettes. If you rode a cab or a bus or entered a shop, you would hear the intimidating scream of a cleric reminding you of your sins and listing the bad actions you are committing, which will surely take you to hell. One of the things that were completely prohibited was the TV, and therefore, of course, satellite dishes. Those influenced by such fatwas were not only the people who returned to Egypt from working in the Gulf. The influence of these clerics was neither limited to the poor

⁴⁰² See appendix 1, pp. 180-182, for rare images of al-Hakim on various social occasions with family, fellow intellectuals, friends and with former leaders of the country as evidence of his social "engagement". See also Edward Said's *Representations of the Intellectual*, Vintage books, New York. 1996.

⁴⁰³ This is a prominent Egyptian author of a number of books amongst them are: most recently, a novel titled *Unbreakable Woman*, the *Ivy's dance* in 2009 and a collection of poems in 1990. He is a member of Egypt's Association of Book and Film Critics. This is a personal interview carried out on 21st August 2014 in Cairo, Egypt. (See appendix 2 pp. 196-222) Also see on M Rifa'at: <http://www.maspiro.net/culture/13576-2014-06-21-16-30-22.html>.

⁴⁰⁴ When asked about the future of the nation and of philosophy and literature, Rifa'at was hopeful that, with the growing hostility against the Muslim brotherhood (in the light of recent events) and recognising them as terrorist groups, secularization (in the sense of the separation (or even exclusion) of religion from the matters of the state) will become popular as a more favourable ideology over the coming years.

⁴⁰⁵ Yousef is a political satirist whose name shone after 2011 revolution when he hosted a popular programme "al- Birnameg" in which he commented on current political events. The show is the first internet conversion to TV in the Middle East. Many people considered the show to be a step towards freedom of speech and in 2012 John Stewart invited Yousef to talk on *The Daily Show*. During President Morsi's reign, Yousef was accused of insulting Islam and disrupting public peace. Although he wrote a column for *al-Shuruk* (*Independent daily newspaper*) and was recognised by the TIME magazine as one of the 100 most influential people, his show has been recently terminated and complaints and accusations are currently looked at to this day by the prosecutor.

categories of society. Those who lived throughout this phase may remember that such fatwas influenced the wealthy category as well as private university students. After many religious channels began to make huge profit, fatwas prohibiting the TV disappeared. Suddenly, the TV was no longer prohibited. More than one fourth of Egypt's satellite channels are religious, in which the same clerics - who used to be held captive of cassettes and who used to prohibit the TV describing it as a heresy – appear.⁴⁰⁶

The exploitation of religion that gradually developed over the years is one which supports the view that the most obvious source of barriers to many Arabs today, is the strongly embedded culture of religion that has been misused for personal gain.⁴⁰⁷ Back in the 1950s, al-Hakim predicted this misuse of religion and implied that a form of a non- religious spirituality is what is needed. We, thereby, understand that in order for us to overcome the problems that face us, we should work, individually and collectively, to overcome the social, cultural, political and, most importantly, the intellectual, barriers set upon ourselves⁴⁰⁸. Only then can there be hope for freeing the Arab mind.⁴⁰⁹ Let us then ask, what has lured al-Hakim, regardless of the criticisms (especially those against *Arini Allah (Show me God)* in 1953), to producing his *Equilibrium* in 1955, which is a fusion between Arab philosophy and European existentialism?

According to Hanafi in “Al Falsafa fi'l watan al- ‘Arabi fi Mi’at ‘am” on contemporary Arab philosophy and the question of freedom, whilst the West predicated “Being on Reason”, the East (or the Arab world) predicated “Becoming Free.”⁴¹⁰ This has been a view evident in my initial discussions of European existentialism in Egypt and the birth of Arab existentialism and, also, consequently, in the development of the doctrine of equilibrium. The French connection⁴¹¹ that roused the Arab intellectual, al-Hakim (and many others), led him to going

⁴⁰⁶ Yusuf, Bassem. (2013) “Tele-clerics and custom made fatwas” Cairo: *al-Arabiya News*. Online: <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/views/news/middle-east/2013/05/24/Tele-clerics-and-custom-made-fatwas-.html> (accessed/ 21/08/2014).

⁴⁰⁷ This is evident after the rise and fall of the Muslim brotherhood groups and more recently, the negative stigma assigned to them in the Middle East and in the West.

⁴⁰⁸ Al-Hakim seems to imply that these barriers are our own doing. See also chapter two p.109 on “transcendence” in the doctrine of equilibrium (to be understood as overcoming a condition and surpassing it)

⁴⁰⁹ The proceedings of the 12th Philosophical conference suggest “breaking entirely free from the past” a view which al-Hakim would object to and, as expressed in his *Fann al-Adab*, suggests that it is necessary to firstly understand the past in order to progress in the future.

⁴¹⁰ He says “I am free, therefore I am”. See Hasan Hanafi. (1988) “Contemporary Arabic philosophy” published by the University of Jordan.

⁴¹¹ Note that the majority of intellectuals of this period (1950s) were educated via the French system. An informal survey held by the Arab Association of Arab universities found that 300 Professors of philosophy in Egypt and Lebanon where taught philosophy at school level.

beyond the circumstances that might have otherwise shackled his freedom of thought. With this in mind, let us look at this passage:

The philosopher who does not produce ideology is the most dangerous kind of philosopher, for he is simply reproducing a pre-existing ideology, one expressing (a pre-existing) social conflict or national interest under the guise of being a neutral statement about ‘Man and the World’. In doing this, his philosophy simply reproduces an ideology which has already served its historical purpose.⁴¹²

The ideology of al-Hakim (as ambitious as it may seem) aims to address all the Arab World’s predicament. This goal raises many questions regarding al-Hakim’s success. In his late work *Tahaddiyat Sanat Alfain (Challenges of the year 2000)*, published in 1980,⁴¹³ he tells of an imaginary dialogue between his donkey, his beret and his stick.⁴¹⁴ These imaginary characters echo his views and feelings towards the concept of “revolution” and “commitment”. While one understands this almost obsessive preoccupation with these ideas, one cannot help but wonder how useful al-Hakim’s discussions are, especially in our present day. In a nutshell, from the text, al-Hakim holds that a public let loose, without a vision for change that can be implemented (in present or in the near future) in order to build upon its history, is one whose efforts are in vain. As for the intellectual, like himself, he concludes that the Arab world has failed to cultivate philosophers and intellectuals of all hues. Although he opposes the idea of joining a specific party (and instead he found his voice via his writings, perhaps as a “half-way activist”), he admits that it is truly unfortunate that those who have been actors in the political arena have constantly over the years met with fierce opposition (and their works ignored), whether the opposition is from the people, society, government or from the opposing parties in power.⁴¹⁵

⁴¹² M. A. al- Jabiri *Nahnu Wa'l- Turath: Qira'at mu'asirah fi Turathina al-Falsafi (Us and Our heritage: Contemporary readings in our philosophical heritage)*, Casablanca: Arab Cultural Centre, 5th Ed, 1986.

⁴¹³ See in appendix 2 p.196 my translation of al-Hakim’s *Tahaddiyat Sanat Alfain* translated as *Challenges of the year 2000*. (1980) Dar Misr Press. Series of articles, see “al- thawri wal moltazim” (The Revolutionist and the Committed), pp. 178- 181.

⁴¹⁴ He began to wear a French beret and hold a stick following the fashion in France. The style of writing has become a fashion where he personifies and gives voice to objects in order to express his views freely.

⁴¹⁵ One can name a few who were assassinated as a result of their ideas; firstly, Naguib Mahfouz (Nobel Prize winner) was threatened by the Muslim brotherhood in the 1950s, Mahdi al-‘Amil was assassinated by religious fanatics in Lebanon and Hussein Meruw’weh; Sayed Qutub, fundamentalist theoretician, was executed at the hands of authorities in Cairo. Muhammed Baqeer was assassinated by Saddam’s regime and, from those who were jailed numerous times, Sa’d Eddin Ibrahim. One might also add that Badawi lived and died at the sidewalk of real life, as claimed in the lectures by Maqdisi on Arab Philosophy. Al-Hakim concludes his article “The Revolutionist and the Committed”, by asking: “are such voices mere harbingers of false dreams? Is silence in this case a moral option?” Perhaps this is so in the latter cases rather than in al-Hakim’s, as evident in the survival of his work and the re-found interest in them by some over the years.

II.

Before explaining further the personal attacks on al-Hakim and his philosophy from clerics, I would like to take the opportunity to advance briefly a clarification of his reputation as a misogynist; a title assigned to him as a result of a debate with leading Egyptian feminist, Huda Sha'rawy (1879- 1947).⁴¹⁶ Al-Hakim noticed the absence of the role of women from the positions of power in the Egyptian society (and from positions of power), and accordingly wrote about this. His views were inspired by the views of Qasim Amin (1863- 1903),⁴¹⁷ who initiated a movement for the liberation of women. Sha'rawy (as well as Doria Shoukri and other feminists who played an active role like Nabawiya Moussa and Ceza Nabarawi) led this movement after Amin died. The speculations that arose as a result of al-Hakim's comments in respect of Sha'rawy's views are responsible for attributing the title of a misogynist to his name. Salah Montasser writes in *al-Hakim's Last Testimony*, on al-Hakim's behalf, that the attack was due to his comments on how Sha'rawy thinks that women, especially young ones, should liberate themselves from the chains of "servitude" and duties towards men on the basis that they are equal to men in everything. Al-Hakim says that those who followed Sha'rawy considered this to be an invitation to neglect their domestic responsibilities. "In a humorous manner, I wrote [presumably in his al-Ahram column] advising the modern woman to at least be capable of providing a simple meal for her family such as baked potatoes."⁴¹⁸

As early as 1923, as a prominent intellectual, Sha'rawy wrote detesting the traditional role of the Egyptian woman (as a mother or a wife) and called for her liberation from her "duties" and for change. Al-Hakim too blamed the traditional role of the woman and her absence in leading positions in the Egyptian society. He said it made the idea of heroism impossible.⁴¹⁹ This claim was misunderstood by feminists who also objected to al-Hakim's view that a woman has a responsibility towards her husband and her children, which should

⁴¹⁶ Sha'rawy served as the head of the Egyptian women's Federation since its founding in 1923 until she passed away in 1947. "The exalted in Istanbul" *Al-Ahram: A Diwan* of contemporary life (561) Al-Ahram online. See <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2004/706/chrncls.htm> (accessed 09/06/2014).

⁴¹⁷ Amin was said to be the "first Egyptian feminist" to call for liberation. He was a jurist, an activist and advocate for social reform during the late 19th c. He was born, like al-Hakim, in Alexandria and was a close friend of Muhammed 'Abduh and Sa'd Zaghoul. It is said also that he was influenced by Darwin's theory. See "The Liberation of Women and The New Woman. Two Documents in the History of Egyptian Feminism," translated by S. Sidhom Peterson, Cairo 2000. (First published in 1988).

⁴¹⁸ Hassan, Maher. "Zay al-Naharda: wafat tawfiq al-Hakim 26 July 1987" Cairo: *almasry al-youn news*. Online, 2014. <http://www.almasryalyoun.com/news/details/489418> (accessed 05/03/2014). Al-Hakim wrote that "just as women are created to grant you things, they also take from you things. Women are not created to keep you at ease or to comfort you".

⁴¹⁹ See al-Hakim's selection of plays where he depicts women such as Izis, Shahrazad and Prisca.

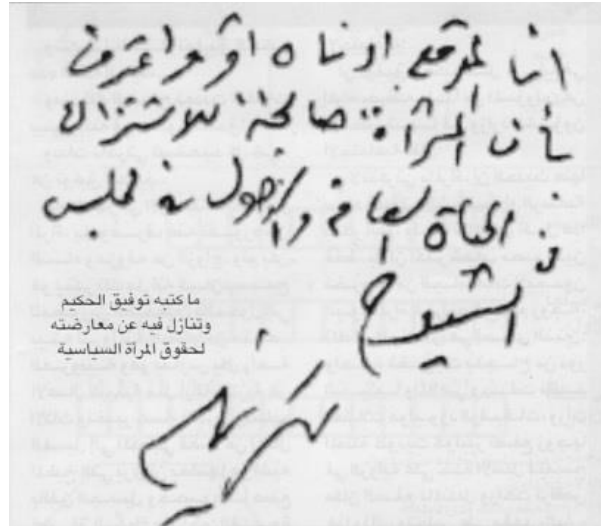
come first before anything else. Although there is no documentation of Sha'rawy responding directly to al-Hakim, the media's reports (mostly in national newspapers such as *Al Masry al-youn*) that explain why they think he was a "misogynist" say that it is because Sha'rawy disapproved of his views. It is unclear whether Sha'rawy referred to him publicly as a "misogynist" or critics and scholars are the ones responsible for assigning him this name.



(Fig. 13) The young al-Hakim with a group of French women

It is said that what he wrote in French that day was “I admit and confess that a woman is able to participate in public life and enter [be a member of] the senate.”⁴²⁰

⁴²⁰ The rare images and information can be found on a blog on the golden age of the Egyptian cinema. See <http://faten2011.wordpress.com>.



(Fig. 14) al-Hakim's handwritten confession.

Egyptian critics,⁴²¹ since the incident between the two thinkers Sha'rawy and al-Hakim, began to pay attention to the representation of women in al-Hakim's dramatic works. Early works such as the '*Usfur min al-Sharq* and *Amam Shubbak al-tahzakir* (*In Front of the ticket office*)⁴²² they said, show the absence of love: particularly, in al-Hakim's upbringing because his relationship with his mother was an unstable one which could be seen to support this idea. Further to this, as al-Enany points out, the failure of al-Hakim's encounters with women and the fact that he delayed getting married till 1946 (people considered it due to his hostility towards women)⁴²³ support also others' misconceptions about his character. Although, on the one hand, the latter play *Amam Shubbak al-tahzakir* can be seen as an example of such claims (i.e. an indication of the absence of love and the failure of female encounters), plays such as *Izis*, *Shahrazad* and the character of Prisca in *Ahl al-Kahf*, show, on the other hand, the opposite. The role of the female protagonist in these plays represents mental strength, intelligence, and pure love. In these narratives, they have been given an independent voice and are always presented positively.⁴²⁴ In his essay *Tahta Shams al-Fikr* (*In the Light of Thought*)

⁴²¹ This would include, for example, Muhammed Shousha in his work *Al-nisa' fi Hayat 'adow al-Mar'a*; Tawfiq al-Hakim (*Women in the life of an enemy of women*; Tawfiq al-Hakim) published by Dar al-Nashr. See <http://rashf.com/book/21684>.

⁴²² This is a one act play written in French and first performed in Paris in 1926. It was later on translated into Arabic in 1935 by Ahmad al-Sawi Muhammed.

⁴²³ No one knew of his marriage till journalist Mustafa Amin wrote, "We, journalists, our job is to get news from the Presidential palace. No one informed us of al-Hakim's marriage." See Taher, Salah. *Ahadith Ma' al-Hakim* (*Talks with al-Hakim*). Beirut: al-Sharqiyah Lel-Nashr wal-tawzi', 1971. pp. 96-97. Also the publication of *Sijn al-Umr*, al-Hakim's autobiography, gave critics the evidence they needed in order to form views in regards of his relationship with women. (For example, al-Hakim spoke of his mother's strict nature).

⁴²⁴ Hence, I see no need to deduce from al-Hakim's early upbringing, and from his relationship with his mother and the unhappy outcome of his first love or his other female encounters in Paris, that he was a child who lacked

the role of the female also represents freedom of thought and the driving force of the nation. He writes:

Before a woman can be a mother or even a house-wife, she needs an education. Egypt is paying too high a price for having kept its women shut in their homes, for it is as though half of its society were just wiped out. The separation of women from life [is] 'a horrible crime, spiritual murder'. No artist ever created anything except in the shadow of a woman. Her absence from the Egyptian society is the reason that 'Egypt has produced nothing yet to impress other nations.'⁴²⁵

Moreover, al-Hakim also shared Amin's view on the importance of liberating the Egyptian woman from any religious barriers. Amin claims that Islam (or the holy Quran) did not teach this subjugation.⁴²⁶ On enhancing a women's status in society, which Amin saw as something that would greatly improve the nation, he writes, "a good mother is more useful to her species than a good man, while a corrupt mother is more harmful than a corrupt man."⁴²⁷ And, on the relationship with the West, he adds, "if Egyptians did not modernise along European lines and if they were 'unable to compete successfully in the struggle for survival, they would be eliminated.'"⁴²⁸ These views are current in today's Egyptian society and emerge as a cause for controversies in dialogues between intellectuals, feminists and fanatics and clerics. The question whether Egyptian women can have an authentic existence, and whether it is possible for Egyptian women to become modern on their own terms,⁴²⁹ is one that

love and affection or that he developed a hostility towards women. This is a hasty generalisation that was based on his reputation at the time than on examinations of all his works.

⁴²⁵ Al-Hakim, Tawfiq. *Tahta Shams al-Fikr*. Cairo: Maktabat al-Adab, 1938. (Reprinted in 1960) pp. 163- 165. These are a series of essays written between 1935 and 1938. Also see his play, *al-Mar'a al-Gadida* (written between 1923 and 1926).

⁴²⁶ In *al-Ta'aduliyya wal-Islam (Equilibrium and Islam)*, al-Hakim supported this position by using Quranic verses and hadiths. Qasim also did the same in support of his views in his work on the liberation of women.

⁴²⁷ Nergis, Mazid. "Western Mimicry or Cultural Hybridity: Deconstructing Qasim Amin's 'Colonized Voice'" Gale Biography. *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, pp.43-46 (Accessed 15/03/2013).

⁴²⁸ This is believed to be inspired by the works of Herbert Spencer and John Stuart Mill who argued for equality of the sexes and believed this was analogous to the "evolution of societies from despotism to democracy". See Smith, Charles D. "Islam and the Search for Social Order in Modern Egypt: A Biography of Muhammad Husayn Haykal" Middle Eastern Studies. New York: State University of New York Press, 1983: p. 233.

⁴²⁹ Back in January, 1956, a new constitution was issued and included the clause "Men and Women are equal in responsibilities and duties": this one clause meant that women can be elected to any position in Egypt and needless to say, of course, gaining her right to vote. Unfortunately laws were added to regulate the equality clause, laws that were not pro-equality between the genders: for example, women were required to prove their literacy, while men were not. The above clause was removed in the constitution of 2012, while another clause of equality among Egyptians is still there as it always was; on its own, this clause is not a guarantee of women's equality to men. Since the constitution does not explicitly state that men and women are equal, new laws can be decreed any day banning women parts of their rights. See Alami, Mona. "Egypt Constitution will be bad news for women, activists say." USA Today, 2013 (Accessed, 2014)

Sha'rawy directed her efforts towards addressing, and it is one that Egyptian feminists today are trying to answer.⁴³⁰

Finally, in a recent article, there are reports of rare personal letters that have been found in Paris from de Beauvoir to al-Hakim following her visit to Egypt in 1967. The letters are said to reveal de Beauvoir's dissatisfaction with this conception of his hostility towards women which she did not think was true of al-Hakim or of his philosophy, and that, despite his reputation, she sees that he recognizes the need for liberating the Egyptian woman; she also agrees with him on the importance of the role of communication between different nations. She writes:

Dear Sir and friend. We have received with great pleasure your letter which reminded us of the great times that we spent together and of your humor and light spirit. I am pleased that you liked the narrative of the journey that we made. And I am also pleased that, despite the enmity for women, you, like myself, are interested in the liberation of women which, in turn, liberates men. Sartre too sends his regards and friendship. Simone de Beauvoir.⁴³¹

It is, therefore, erroneous to use two unhappy incidences in al-Hakim's life in regards to women (primarily his relationship with his mother, and his relationship with women during his adulthood years), as an indication of his hostility towards them. It is also erroneous to use the incident between him and Sha'rawy as one that is anything more than a misunderstanding and an expression of views and ideologies. In the doctrine of equilibrium, he says that one's freedom comes with responsibility towards oneself and towards the Other. This responsibility, regarding the role of women, is their duties towards educating themselves, contributing positively to their society and, more importantly, caring for others they are responsible for, i.e. husband and children. Indeed, this is a traditional view, but not a misogynist one. These are the responsibilities that al-Hakim saw that Egyptian women cannot ignore at any price. The representations of women in al-Hakim's writings should not be entirely viewed in the light of his unhappy encounters, as many critics have done.⁴³² Gilbert also writes in defence of this

⁴³⁰ Sha'rawy officially launched Egypt's feminist movement on 16th of March 1923, the Egyptian Feminist Union (EFU) "*Itihad Alnisa'y al-masry*". She attended conferences abroad (in Turkey and Rome) and succeeded in establishing strong links with international feminist associations. See Sha'rawy, Huda. *Harem Years: The Memoirs of an Egyptian Feminist*. Translated and introduced by Margot Badran. New York: The Feminist Press, 1987.

⁴³¹ This is my translation of the letters from Arabic into English. See Yusuf, Ahmad. "Auction Hall in Paris presents rare letters written by misogynist Tawfiq al-Hakim to two French women" *Al-Masry al- Youm*. (National newspaper online), 30th April 2014, Paris.

⁴³² See Hutchins' *A Reader's Guide*. Chapter nine titled A Hakim's Islamic Feminism p 195. Hutchins writes that Muhammed Hamid Ali found that al-Hakim's work gave a new space for Egyptian women in society whereas other scholars failed to find any indication of such freedom.

criticism and says that, although al-Hakim's writings appeal to emotions, to the heart and love, these emotions "remain strangely unmoving."⁴³³ To clarify, readers are intellectually engaged with (and perhaps are equally convinced of) "the need to give free rein to emotions,"⁴³⁴ but it is questionable whether or not al-Hakim learned to do so, or whether this was an ideal that he personally struggled towards.

III.

In this final section of this chapter, I would like to advance an overview of the articles that document the accusations against al-Hakim as a heretic and a deluded writer. These are central to my proposition that debates between intellectuals and clerics were at their peak during the late 70s and that these debates had a lasting negative effect on al-Hakim in particular, and on his readership and on the availability of his publications. The first article which reports the accusations and criticisms, and influences public opinion, is titled "It is a War between Shaykh Sha'rawy and Tawfiq al-Hakim,"⁴³⁵ where Abdel-Latif claims that the debate also involves writer Yousef Idris. The main reason for this war is the publication of al-Hakim's articles *Arini Allah* (1953), in which he writes:

It is your omnipotence my lord to say "Be" and there it is. I am not asking you to annul a decree; I am asking you that therein be your grace. Your religion is the religion of grace and mercy. The noble goal of those who speak in your name is to embed in the hearts of the people your mercy and grace. Love for you, and not just fearing you, is the path to please you, but most of those who speak in your name [i.e. clerics] exaggerate what makes them fear you rather than conveying what makes them love you. On this basis, they founded Islam on the principle of fear rather than on the principle of love, which is not what you intend or what your prophet (peace upon him) worked towards and said, on your behalf: "There is no compulsion in religion". Compulsion cannot be a basis on which knowledge and love are predicated.

- What will you do with knowledge?

Creature: I do not know, but I desire it.

- People desire heaven and thus, worship God to enter it.

Creature: I do not desire it.

- You desire what God did not give the prophets or the angels.⁴³⁶

Clerics, led by Sha'rawy, considered the imaginary conversation with God which al-Hakim claimed to have had to be a blasphemous act in which, in his arrogance, he gave himself the right to ask questions and to receive direct answers. Shaykh Sha'rawi, in response, issued

⁴³³ Tutungi, G. V. "Tawfiq al-Hakim and the West." Indiana University, 1966.

⁴³⁴ Ibid. p. 14.

⁴³⁵ Date of publication is unknown. The article is written by Anwar 'abdel Latif and published by al-Ahram newspaper (digital).

⁴³⁶ This is my own translation of a passage from al-Hakim's *Arini Allah*, published in 1953.

a statement in the Islamic newspaper *al-Liwa' al-Islami* demanding a meeting with al-Hakim and Idris, and also, Zaki Naguib Mahfouz.⁴³⁷ Although the latter was a prominent philosopher, it is unclear why Sha'rawi asked for him specifically to attend as well. The speculation is that Sha'rawi invited Mahfouz to also initiate a philosophical debate, and not just a religious one, in order to show al-Hakim the error in his ideas.⁴³⁸ Sha'rawi publicly clarified whenever asked about the matter that he called for this meeting in order to respond to al-Hakim personally with concrete evidence that he is deluded about God's religion and been in error. Abdel-Latif, the author of the article (in siding with Sha'rawi and approving of his decision), concludes by saying that Sha'rawi used reason and logic in his methods of debate and dialogue with the intellectuals rather than issuing a direct statement accusing al-Hakim of heresy or disbelief which would have endangered his life.⁴³⁹

In a book review, "Sha'rawi and al-Hakim: Conflict of thought and the fundamentals of belief", reviewer al-Gohairy reports that a new book (image below) had been published with the same title, identifying the intellectual battles of the 20th century.⁴⁴⁰ The writer of the book, Ahmad Mussa 'Abada, discusses, in part one, the religious issues raised in March 1983 as a result of al-Hakim's work *al-Ahadith al-Arba'ah*. The latter caused controversies by discussing the following: the relationship between knowledge and faith, the humanity of the prophets and the "relativity of religions" (a comment which al-Hakim made and many clerics strongly disapproved of). The matter soon became one of public opinion and continued to escalate and affect negatively al-Hakim's reputation and literary legacy till he died. Sha'rawy, once again, publicly commented in the Islamic newspaper, *al-Liwa' al-Islami*, on al-Hakim's writings and style by saying that it is one of delusion and perversion. Additionally, in this article, it is clarified that Dr Zaki Naguib Mahmoud had an active role to play in the debates with Sha'rawy and al-Hakim and that he sided with the latter. Moreover, it is claimed that the fierce debate ended with a strong friendship between Sha'rawy and al-Hakim, although this friendship had little effect, if any, on the public's view and the harm that was already done. It is worth noting that Sha'rawy's name is not the only cleric mentioned in this article; Shaykh Muhammed al-

⁴³⁷ Mahfouz wrote in 1954 a book titled *The History of Western Philosophies*. Publisher unknown.

⁴³⁸ Note that Zaki Naguib Mahfouz wrote a commentary on al-Hakim's supplement *al-Ta'aduliyyah wa al-Islam* (1983) in which he attempts to closely link the doctrine of *al-Ta'aduliyyah* (Equilibrium) to Islamic doctrines.

⁴³⁹ 'Abdal-Latif, Anwar. "It is a War between Shaykh Sha'rawy and Tawfiq al-Hakim" *al-Ahram*. <http://digital.ahram.org.eg/Policy.aspx?Serial=1598841> (accessed 24/08/2014).

⁴⁴⁰ Muhammad al-Gohairy's book review of 'Abada, Ahmad Mussa. *Al-Sharawi and al-Hakim: Conflict of thought and the fundamentals of belief*. Garidat al-Ta'awun Press, 2012. The book is by the Islamic researcher 'Abada, and the introduction on the author and the intellectual is by Islamist Ahmad Bahgat.

Ghazali and Dr. Muhammed al- Tayib al- Nagar, were amongst clerics who were identified as leaders of the attacks on al-Hakim's ideas.



*Book cover designed by artist, Sayed Abdel Fattah.
From left to right: al- Sha'rawy and al-Hakim.
On the left corner is an image of the book author, Ahmad Mussa 'Abada*

In a second review, Muhammed 'Abd al- Raziq wrote in the Literature and Arts category of the al- Matraqa webpage,⁴⁴¹ that Raziq states that Professor Ahmad Bahgat, Islamic cleric and writer, claims that al-Hakim's motive for writing a conversation with God is "love", meaning the kind of love that one proclaims for the lover. It is not a crime for one to speak with whom he loves. However, in a conversation with God, one must be humble and show humiliation and respect. Bahgat adds that this is something that al-Hakim did not show in his dialogues or conform to in expressing his love for the divine. When al-Hakim described religions as "relative", clerics objected strongly to this idea, and what made matters worse for his position was his claim that scientists of this temporal life, such as Einstein and Kastler,⁴⁴² would go to heaven based on their actions and not based solely on the Islamic declaration of faith (The Shahada). Al-Telmesany, leader of the Muslim brotherhood during this period, said explicitly in response to al-Hakim's claim regarding Einstein and Kastler, that one is not a Muslim, or a believer of the faith, if he did not make the declaration which states that "there is

⁴⁴¹ This was published on the 22nd February 2012.

<http://www.almatraqa.com/oldsite/showstry.php?toicid=10375>.

⁴⁴² This refers to Alfred Kastler (1902-1984), French physicist and Nobel laureate. He was at the École Normale Supérieure in Paris in 1921. In 1941, he taught at the University of Bordeaux, where he was a university professor, and in 1952 he was asked by Georges Bruhat to return to the École Normale Supérieure where Kastler finally obtained a chair. See Happer, William (1984). "Obituary: Alfred Kastler". *Physics Today* 37 (5): 101–102.

no God but Allah, and that Prophet Muhammed is his messenger.” The debate escalated and the criticism increased as some questioned al-Hakim’s attitude and claims and sarcastically asked if he had appointed himself to be a lawyer on Einstein and Kastler’s behalf, and why did he give himself the right to make such claims about them. The question, “Who will or will not go to heaven or hell?”, accordingly, became a topic of fierce discussions amongst, on the one hand, al-Hakim and intellectuals and, on the other, fanatics and clerics. The divisions in public opinion reached their peak, and some people (who claimed knowledge of the holy book and of Islamic history) pointed out that Prophet Ibrahim, who is considered a Muslim, did not make such a declaration and came before prophet Muhammed; does this mean that he will not go to heaven? And who is it to say that he is not a Muslim after all?

Prominent names were involved, besides Sha’rawy, in these debates. Al-Ghazali, Dr. al- Nagar, Dr ‘Asha Abdel-Rahman (known as Bent el Shate’), Dr. Muhammed Sayed Ahmad al-Mayser, Dr. Al Husseiny Hashem (of the Islamic research Centre), Dr Moussa Lasheen (Professor of interpretation and Hadiths of al-Azhar University), and Dr. Ahmad Amr Hashem were amongst others who objected to al-Hakim’s ideas. Besides the media attacks, they held a four hour session dedicated solely to discussing al-Hakim’s claims and attacking his views. Although one may consider this to be an event which shows the importance of al-Hakim as a writer, it has, socially, damaged his reputation and affected his readership in a negative way (i.e. the publications decreased and some of his work were either censored or intentionally damaged). ‘Abada, scholar and author of the book, *“Sha’rawi and al-Hakim: Conflict of thought and the fundamentals of belief”*, spent more than ten years researching the details of these fierce debates between intellectuals and clerics in order to present to the Egyptian generation today the dialogues, their implications for Egyptian thought and their importance within their historical context. The reassessment of these debates and publication of these articles, which identify the conflicts between intellectuals and clerics, are important to Egyptians today because of the recent events with regards to the Muslim Brotherhood groups and the issues raised by clerics and the public regarding (a) the role of religion and governance, (b) the validity and credibility of Islamic doctrine and, most importantly, (c) the implementation of Islam in a modern Muslim society. The latter have been raised since the fall of former President Morsi who represented the Muslim Brotherhood and attempted to implement their political agenda. The public’s opinion, as a result, is one of discontent, due to how Islam is now perceived in a negative light nationally and internationally, and how it was

used wrongly by those who claimed that they spoke in God's name and are now declared a terrorist group.

In 2014, in an article titled "Tawfiq al-Hakim: al Katib aladhi Tahadatha ma'a Allah" (Tawfiq al-Hakim: The author who 'spoke to God'),⁴⁴³ Fayeze writes that Naguib Mahfouz moved from his small office in *al-Ahram* newspaper to a bigger one, which previously belonged to al-Hakim before he died in 1987.⁴⁴⁴ He adds, as much as al-Hakim's intellectual legacy was at this period, it was matched by the amount of fierce criticisms from clerics as a result of his daring claim to have had a dialogue with God.⁴⁴⁵ This is regardless of al-Hakim's testimony at the beginning of his work where he writes:

A dialogue between us [himself and God] will not happen if God, in his grace and generosity, does not allow for it to be. I will form the dialogue between us with imagination and narrative. As you are the listener and not the one to respond, I will respond, using assumption, on your behalf. This is regardless my knowledge that my conversation with you will anger fanatics who will see my attempt daring and disrespectful, especially that I will speak to you without formality.⁴⁴⁶

He continues:

Suddenly, what was unexpected happened. I almost fainted. I heard God's voice, or an imaginary one, saying: If you excel in maths and join the school of sciences, will you see me? This was what I heard and it was enough for me to believe that God has approved having this conversation with me.⁴⁴⁷

Amr al-Telmesany, the leader of the Muslim brotherhood group during this period, writes that al-Hakim had forgotten God's statement in the holy Quran that no one speaks to God without a means of revelation or through a prophet whom he chooses. Al-Telmesany asks, "If it is the voice of the divine who spoke to al-Hakim, which one should we believe? God's words in his Quran or al-Hakim's words, this knowledgeable philosopher?"⁴⁴⁸ What al-Telmesany is referring to is as follows:

⁴⁴³ Fayeze, Sameh "Tawfiq al-Hakim: Katib tahadatha ma'a Allah" (The author who spoke to God) 26th July 2014. Cairo: *Al-Tahrir Newspaper* (digital) www.altahrir.com/details.php?ID=53939.

⁴⁴⁴ Mahfouz refused to sit on al-Hakim's desk and said that he considers himself less in grandeur than the deceased author, so, accordingly, he sat in an opposite desk.

⁴⁴⁵ The initial attempt to make these dialogues public were through al-Hakim's column in *al-Ahram* newspaper where he published a series of articles with the title "Hiwar ma'a Allah" (Conversations with God) which was published later on as a book.

⁴⁴⁶ Al-Hakim, T. *Al-Ahadith al-Arbaah Wa-al-Qadaya al-Diniyah Allati Atharatha*. Cairo: Maktabat al-Adab, 1983.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁸ Telmesany, Amr. "Hakadha tanhi hayhatak ya hakim?" (Is this how you will end your life al-Hakim?) *Al-Nour magazine*, 9th of March 1983.

“And it was not (vouchsafed) to any mortal that Allah should speak to him unless (it be) revelation of from behind a veil, or (that) he send a messenger to reveal what He will by His leave. He is exalted and wise.” Verse 51 of Surat al-Shura

The interpretation of this verse is that one can only speak to God either through a means of revelation, i.e. in a dream or inspiration, or “from behind a veil” meaning that a person hears God’s words and sees signs like in the case of Prophet Moses. Alternatively, the person speaks to God through a messenger, an angel like Gabriel or an apostle with God’s permission. Al-Telmesany’s attack on al-Hakim is by no means justified based on his use of this verse. First, because, as I previously showed, al-Hakim wrote at the beginning of his work that it was an imaginary conversation which would have a sole voice and which answer on behalf of God (thus, he gives God no character or voice of his own in the narrative). And secondly, al-Telmesany seems to be attacking al-Hakim’s daring attempt as an intellectual to do this, breaking from dogma and contrary to what is expected of a Muslim. Sha’rawy, like al-Telmesany, and with sarcasm, says:

Tawfiq al-Hakim did not reveal to us how he spoke to God. Was it a direct conversation or did God send him an angel? And what was the means of communication between them? If it was an imaginary dialogue on behalf of God, then al-Hakim did not only express his views and attribute them to God, but also he had limited God’s will in presenting it as his own. What al-Hakim’s mind wishes for God to say is what we see in these articles.⁴⁴⁹

Fayez writes that a few Muslim fanatics claimed that al-Hakim, before he died, expressed his remorse for what he had written in his articles. There is, however, no evidence of such a claim in any of the documentations around the time of al-Hakim’s death. In fact, his writings, from the 50s to the end of his career, show his strong belief in his doctrine of equilibrium and in his views regarding religion and Islam, regardless of any speculations.⁴⁵⁰ Moreover, criticism from the clerics also arose in connection with al-Hakim’s short story “The Martyr”.⁴⁵¹ Cleric Abou Ishak al-Haweny dedicated in one of his speeches in the mosque a part of it where he criticised the short story and described it as one written by a heretic and a disbeliever who is neither successful nor wise.⁴⁵² Also, cleric Abdel Hameed Keshk had

⁴⁴⁹ Fayez, Sameh. “Tawfiq al-Hakim: The author who spoke to God” 26th July 2014. *Al- Tahrir Newspaper* (digital) [www. Altahrir.com/details.php?ID=53939](http://www.Altahrir.com/details.php?ID=53939).

⁴⁵⁰ See the letter by the publisher of al-Hakim’s *Al-Ahadith al-Arbaah (The Four conversations)* (sometimes translated as *The Four Soliloquies with Allah*) by M and A. Aly Hassan, pp.13-16.

⁴⁵¹ Al-Hakim, Tawfiq. *Arini Allah*, second story in the book titled “al- Shahid” (The Martyr), 1953. pp. 10-21. See chapter two p.125- p.130, my discussion of the duality between God and Satan in relation to this short story.

⁴⁵² This is a play on the meaning of al-Hakim’s name; Tawfiq (success) and al-Hakim (the wise). There is a YouTube video of Haweny’s speech in the mosque after Friday prayer where he talks of al-Hakim and publicly criticises his work and accuse him of heresy.

publicly voiced his criticism of al-Hakim's ideas on national television⁴⁵³ and through national radio channels. Fayez, the author of this article, is not siding with either side, which is unlike other authors who documented or commented on these debates, for they always voiced their views on the matter. He concludes his article by saying that what is strange is that during the whole period al-Hakim's name was on the rise, he was not attacked to such an extent until the movement of "the awakening of Islam" began to emerge in the mid-70s. Perhaps if al-Hakim had lived longer, we would have heard a story of his assassination as a disbeliever or worse, such has been the case with intellectuals killed in cold blood. Luckily, he died before witnessing the beginning of the "deterioration of consciousness."⁴⁵⁴

In conclusion, from the criticisms above one may deduce that al-Hakim was a writer who went through various stages throughout his career. The accusations are too many to mention, but those that the public remember to this day said about him are that he was "a misogynist" and "a miser". It is not implausible that people do not say openly that he was also accused (wrongly) of heresy out of respect for his literary legacy and the improvements he made to theatre and, also, to Egyptian cinema since some of his plays and novels became classical films loved by many such as *al- Aydi al Na'imah (The Soft Hands)* (in which famous Egyptian actor Ahmad Mazhar and legendary actress, Sabah played the lead roles). The criticisms in regards to *Arini Allah* (1953) and *al-Ahadith al-Arba'ah* (1983) are not justified on the basis that clerics used hadiths to devalue al-Hakim's ideas without consideration that the framework in which he writes in is one of literature and philosophy and not religion. The reason for their doing so was simply in accordance with the trend of the time, which was the revival of Islamic dogma, in contrast with the intellectual renaissance in the period before the 70s or, more specifically, during Nasser's reign. The "awakening of Islam" was a movement that did not allow for unfamiliar ideas that are opposed to the Islamic doctrines and Shari'a laws. Those who led this movement overlooked the view that they were living in a modern society with different ideologies and different needs to that of the Islamic olden days. What al-Hakim did was indicative of an author's right to creativity and expression of his beliefs openly and faithfully without fearing criticism. His clerical opponents neither accepted the limitations of their prerogatives, nor did they accept that a writer or an intellectual had such rights. The

⁴⁵³ There is also a Youtube video of Shaykh Keshk attacking publicly al-Hakim on national television and accusing him of heresy.

⁴⁵⁴ The writer makes reference to al-Hakim's work *Yakazit al-wa'y (The Awakening of consciousness)* in order to say that, in his view, our present day there is a deteriorating period (post the 1970s) in all aspects: intellectually, socially, politically and so on.

personal attacks on his character were because of his close links with France, his French education and his travels and intellectual links with like-minded scholars. He was not afraid of confronting opposing views and those who found his ideas problematic. His addition to the book *The Four conversations* is a testimony where he asks “Why I am a Muslim?” and replies, “because of these three elements: Mercy, Knowledge, Humanity, and above all, it is because I declare that God is the omnipotent, the all mighty, and that Muhammed is his prophet.” With this statement, and his testimony that he is fully responsible for the “imaginary and narrated” dialogue (the questions and answers are his own and not God’s), he showed the untenability of those criticisms that continued to escalate even after he died.⁴⁵⁵

⁴⁵⁵ Although debates such as these have encouraged authors to express their opinions, the result of such debates remain the same; either the author dies naturally of old age and the debate gradually come to an end with the author’s reputation tarnished, or the author becomes either victim to assassination attempts from different sources or imprisoned. It is a shame that al-Hakim experienced these attacks. See the introduction of al-Hakim’s book *Arini Allah (Show Me God)* translated into English by H. H. Mayyas, PhD. Ling. al-Azhar University, and revised by J. Cochran, PhD. English. Texas University, in appendix 2, p. 196.

CONCLUSION

Given the constraints outlined in the thesis introduction, this thesis alone cannot provide answers for the questions posed directly or indirectly at the outset or by historian Di- Capua in his work on Arab existentialism; such as “Who is the Arab subject? Can this subject think of himself or herself in a language that would be organic to his or her history? Can Arabs have an authentic existence, and is it possible for Arabs to become modern on their own terms?” These questions are of crucial importance today. Nevertheless, the thesis has gone some way towards identifying a specific period in which these questions were examined and were at the heart of intellectual debates. The thesis has also identified a possible position for Muslims today towards existentialism and borrowed ideas from the West that has originally Eastern roots. As has been shown, Tawfiq al-Hakim’s writings can be of great value to us today. His philosophical writings help us understand a very rich period, which contributed to the shaping of Egyptian thought. This thesis has attempted to explore and address the criticisms made against al-Hakim by examining a number of possible influences on his writings and character and possible ways of understanding his doctrine of equilibrium. It is not likely that by looking at his dramatic works alone we would be able to resolve all of the issues identified above in his doctrine of equilibrium. But in my view, for one to get a full understanding of his thought, one should consider his drama and his philosophical writings as complementary to one another.

The aim of this chapter, therefore, is to draw on the preceding examinations and analyses of al-Hakim and his writings in relation to the historical context in which he lived in and to summarize what I believe his doctrine of equilibrium can offer us today. Al-Hakim was fortunate enough to be, as part of his early education, acquainted with some of the most prominent figures of his time. These figures included Lutfi al-Sayyid, Taha Husayn, Mustafa Abdel Raziq, Naguib Mahfouz, Yusuf Idris, Hassanain Haykal, Yehia Haky and, from the West, Sartre, Lanzmann, de Beauvoir and many others who left their mark in the history of literature, philosophy, and the arts. The climate in which al-Hakim found himself in was right for the birth of an intellectual. Not only was the Egyptian nation experiencing a cultural and social transition in which education (with a focus on translations into Arabic) played a major role, but also the regime was clear, at least to some extent, of fanatics. As a result, we have an image of Egypt (from past Egyptian newspapers in *al-Ahram* archive between the 50s to late 60s) as a

thriving hub of cultural exchange and individual and social progress.⁴⁵⁶ It is unfortunate that the dream that Nasser and Sadat held at the beginning of their reign to reconnect Egypt with the rest of the world and, as the latter said, to make it “a piece of Europe”, was crushed in the mid-70s by the beginning of a wave of extremism.⁴⁵⁷ The intellectual renaissance that once thrived failed to survive the obstacles put in its way by its opponents, who channelled their efforts to replace gradually but steadily Egypt’s former image with what has become of the country today.⁴⁵⁸ Today, in Egypt, the view that is shared by a few Egyptians, (which should not misconstrue of Egypt’s reality or the nature of its malady), is that it is not another Islamic domino that is destined to fall as a result of the fight between the regime and Islamicists. On the contrary, the climate on Egypt’s streets is one that reflects a move towards a separation of religion from politics (even if it is an idea that will take many years to take effect).

The question “can al-Hakim’s doctrine and writings offer us something meaningful today?” can have different answers. First, in the case of his philosophical narratives, these raise the important question whether the East and the West can accept the idea that the two systems of thought (Eastern and Western) are not as distinct as they may at first appear. This goes hand-in-hand with a questioning of such monolithic categories as 'Western' and 'Middle Eastern' which has recently been the focus of debates in university social and cultural studies departments.⁴⁵⁹ From the early chapters of this thesis, one realises that there were strong international relationships between Egypt and the West, particularly with Britain and France

⁴⁵⁶ On the 7th of February 1967, the newspaper issue announced a construction project whereby chalets will be built across Alexandria promenade in the same style as French houses. In the same issue, there is an article on the style and look of the Egyptian Modern woman and updates on the styles of European women. Also, there is an announcement that fashion designer, Ralph Lauren, will be the one to design the outfits for flight attendants of Egyptair.

⁴⁵⁷ Islamist groups’ activities during the mid-70s included entering different universities in Egypt in order to gather students and teach them how to pray. Preaching became a growing phenomenon as they increased in number and began to condemn the regime and, most importantly, the secular figures in politics and culture who were branded heretics and apostates. The attacks extended also to hounding the Copts (a community of no less than six million in Egypt) and advocating an Islamic state, even if through encouraging the use of illegitimate means.

⁴⁵⁸ It is worth noting that Modern Egypt, over the last two centuries was only governed by two regimes: First, the dynasty of the Albanian-born Muhammad Ali (emerged in the aftermath of the chaos of Napoleon’s invasion of Egypt in 1798) and secondly, the Free Officers regime (Nasser and Sadat). No one could have predicted that the Islamists groups’ would fulfil their goal of reaching power, first, by the appointment of former President Morsi and by their persistent role in politics and shaping Egyptian society and culture (i.e. through their access to airwaves and print media in order to influence the masses). Today, “beyond the modernity of Cairo and Alexandria, away from the glare of publicity, the running war between the police and the Islamicists degenerated into the timeless politics of vengeance and vendettas, an endless cycle of killings and reprisals.” Ajami, Fouad. “The Sorrow of Egypt: A tale of two men” Cairo: Foreign Affairs. September/October Issue, 1995. <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/51401/fouad-ajami/the-sorrows-of-egypt-a-tale-of-two-men>. Accessed 2014.

⁴⁵⁹ This has been raised as a topic of research in the interdisciplinary conference titled “Writing beyond borders” held on 20th September 2013 at the Language and cultures’ graduate school at Manchester University.

(during President Nasser's era and to some extent during President Sadat's). One also comes to grasp that this relationship was not only a political and economic one, or about an exchange of education (i.e. scholars sent abroad in an exchange of knowledge programmes), but also that Egyptian society was adaptable and accepting of the rapprochement between cultures. This was not only between the Egyptian and the French culture, but also between Egyptian and American or Japanese cultures. Evidence of this, broadly speaking, can be found in newspaper images in *al-Ahram* newspaper. These images, mostly adverts and announcements, show not only the link between Egypt and the West, but also highlight the extent of Western influences on Egyptian thought and lifestyle. Although the majority of these adverts are naturally in Arabic, some are in English and advertise foreign products and services by international companies who are cooperating with national ones. Al-Hakim's writings are a product of their time and they show that reconciliation between the two cultures, Eastern and Western, in the fields of literature and philosophy is not only possible but also natural and necessary.

To clarify the latter proposition, first, al-Hakim used in his play *Ya Tali' al-Shajara* a familiar Egyptian folklore song (with the same name) to present Western ideas, namely those of the theatre of the absurd. In other words, his protagonists were faced with the futility of the tasks they were participating in and yet, in their struggle, they found in life's absurdity and its meaninglessness a purpose to live for. The play was staged in Egypt and despite criticisms and the fact that the play was not successful, it is known today as an important attempt to introduce the Egyptian public to a new genre that was once unknown and now is familiar. Another example that shows a consolidation between cultures is al-Hakim's adaptations of Greek plays. Greek culture has a long history in Egypt and many translations have been made over the centuries from Greek into Arabic and vice versa. When al-Hakim chose to rewrite two plays, Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion* and the tale of King Oedipus (*al-Malik Udib*), and to present them to the Egyptian public, his main interest was to introduce ideas and beliefs he admired from different cultures. His aim was to present these ideas in an experimental manner in his own writings. These ideas were: love of art and beauty, love of knowledge, and the search for the truth. These, broadly speaking, are common recurrent themes in the history of Islamic philosophy as well as Western philosophy. These particular ideas, adopted and developed accordingly, became underlying themes in his plays and philosophical narratives. This was not all: the doctrine of equilibrium shows us that, for al-Hakim, a discussion of these ideas can shed light on some of the problems that face us in modern societies and show us the value of our struggles. This is al-Hakim's positive approach towards realising that we live in a "tragic

existence” whereby one’s course in life can change or be affected by a sum of forces that are all out of one’s control. And thus, he suggests adapting the belief that even if we do not manage to resolve any of our troubles in life, or reach the goals that we set for ourselves, the journeys or the experiences we go through are, worthwhile. The constant struggle in life in order to achieve a goal (sometimes unknown) and the search for artistic perfection is at the heart of al-Hakim’s doctrine of equilibrium. The message that one gradually comprehends throughout his writings is that struggle is an integral part of one’s life story. It is necessary for progress because, without struggle, one will not be able to discover one’s strength.

Secondly, the existential dilemma that interested al-Hakim and that was inspired by debates emerging in the midst of Arab existentialism and, later on, movements like socialism and pan-Arabism for example, began with the quest to find an explanation for the status of the human being in his society and his status in his universe. The quest for purpose and meaning occupied al-Hakim’s mind along with the search for an Arab identity in the light of the different ideologies of his time. This period was seething with an unprecedented variety and range of ideas. Al-Hakim was affected by some ideas more than others and by 1950, he was ready to make some suggestions about what he felt were the primary problems facing human beings. It was as if al-Hakim was living between two worlds: on the one hand, he experienced the changes in Egyptian society, from an intellectual renaissance that was to a great extent liberal and open to the West, socially and culturally, to a rather conservative society; and on the other hand, he experienced the changes in thought in the West and in people’s attitudes. To clarify the latter, the different views debated by existentialist philosophers related to the issues of freedom and the meaning of life. Although the consensus among these philosophers was that there is a meaning in life, they differed in their answer to the following questions. Is there *inherent* meaning the universe? Can we create real meaning ourselves? Is the pursuit of inherent meaning possible? Is the pursuit of created meaning possible? And finally, can we solve the problem of meaning by creating our own? Al-Hakim, like Sartre and de Beauvoir believed that there is a meaning in life, but he agreed more with Kierkegaard that we have to have “faith” to believe so, and al-Hakim added that we must not forget the limits of our knowledge as human beings. All we can do is to attempt to create meaning for ourselves, regardless of the absurdity and meaningless of our lives; we can solve the problem of meaning by creating our own and, at the same time, acknowledging our limitations. One may ask: Is existentialism a possible position today for a Muslim? The answer to this question depends on, I believe, how long the “Islamization” of the Egyptian society (which gained ground since the 1970s and is now

affected by the aftermaths of the 2011 revolution and the rise and fall of the Muslim brotherhood) begins to diminish. The hope is that with the misuse of religion over the past years, a non-religious spirituality is formed and through it, individuals and the society as a whole can find a way to address key issues that would liberate the Egyptian society from old shackles which has hindered the intellectual and social progress over the past years.

Tawfiq al-Hakim's writings began to present a distinct and particular approach to modernity. The two worlds concerned al-Hakim and he formed an image for modern man as one who is growing anxious of his own safety. Regardless of modern man's vast triumphs, he fears his own destruction. In the West, a few writers have taken a similar approach after WWII according to which a halt to materialism and a spiritual regeneration are demanded. The latter was based not so much on traditional Christianity as on a vague mysticism of the oriental type that had been popularised. The encounters with great figures led to developments in al-Hakim's writings which show that the distinction between cultures is man-made. His encounter with Sartre and de Beauvoir and their friendship opened up a new dialogue which was needed during this time and necessary for a thriving intellectual scene. Discussions about the extent of human freedom and the force of circumstances were crucial for al-Hakim, as for Sartre, in that they introduced the former to Western thought and showed the latter the Eastern reservations about the idea of one's freedom as absolute.

The role of the intellectual, accordingly, as al-Hakim held it to be, should be unconstrained. He was embracing the good and the bad in other cultures, observing and reflecting. After President Nasser, he feared the antipathy of conservative Muslims who began to play an active role in society and shape the minds of young intellectuals. He, however, continued to write which he expressed in his autobiographical works was his sole defence mechanism. He added to the Eastern philosophy a new dimension by showing Egyptians the Other's perspective. The same can be said of Sartre who was meeting different influential figures of his time. One should, therefore, applaud both authors for promoting, directly or indirectly, a conception of borderless thought which aimed to pave the way for further global connections between countries and a "borderless" thought. Al-Hakim's adaptations from Greek mythologies such as *Pygmalion* and *al-Malik Udib*, and those from the Pharaonic era, such as his play *Izis*, inspired him to produce engaging plays and short stories. His use of Egyptian folk tales and stories from Western literature (such as Goethe's *Faust*) show a perfect example of a cultural rapprochement that is both innovative and engaging.

Did the writer overshadow the philosopher in al-Hakim's case? Perhaps. According to Shamroukh,⁴⁶⁰ al-Hakim's philosophical narratives, after the 1960s and after the controversy created by the publication of *Arini al-Allah* and the consequential debates involving clerics, suffered a lot: in terms of both the works' publications and readership. Some of al-Hakim's readers were affected by the controversy and formed a negative view of him and his work. The timing with which this happened couldn't have been worse. The Islamic movement had already launched its agenda which entailed an attack on anyone who would question their beliefs (or demands). Sadly, the image of Egypt as a liberal society has been replaced by a more conservative one, accompanied by a regime that limits the intellectual's involvement in the political arena, and has given Islamists more say in the country's affairs and more importantly, more authority over the media, which maximises their influence on the Egyptian people. To answer the question, "Is there a role for the intellectual today and is there a role for philosophy in the Middle-East?" one must say that, since the mid-1970s, the role of the intellectual is one that is dictated by the regime and, more generally, by the public, (which is greatly influenced by the media). In the name of religion, the awakening of the Islamic movement (which rapidly became a global movement with connections tying Egypt to other Islamic countries) has caused intellectuals to fear for their safety. Today, if one attempts to say something meaningful in Egypt, something that might lead to positive change, or to demand one's basic rights, the attacks from opponents are automatically directed at one's character rather than at what one says. These criticisms are aimed at the individual in order simply to discredit and devalue him or her. Since January 2011, a new movement in Egyptian society has been unleashed, the effects of which can only be guessed at rather than predicted because, until recently, the future of Egypt was a marginal adjustment from the past. Will it allow intellectuals a role within the new regime? Will it open for itself new ways of philosophical engagements? Will there be, most importantly, a global intellectual dialogue from which the Egyptian can form his or her own identity freely and openly without prejudices? Or will this regime be another chapter in the history of Egypt that promises more than it delivers?

⁴⁶⁰ See my interview with M. Shamroukh of *al-Ahram* newspaper in appendix 2, p. 225.

APPENDIX 1

- Al Hakim's family consent form
- Personal Images
- Brief synopsis of Badawi's work.
- Translation of Al Hakim's *Challenges of the year 2000*
- Translation of Al Hakim's *The Literature of Life*
- Translation of Al Hakim's introduction of the Four Conversations

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Organization: _____	Email: <u>ielhakim@hotmail.com</u> —

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Zeinab El Hakim

Additional comments:

Personal photos of Tawfiq al-Hakim



A special moment with his granddaughter and grandson, Mariam and Ismail Nabil



A photo taken by Antoune Albert, a photographer at al-Ahram's photography department.



Al-Hakim and his donkey



Al-Hakim amongst intellectuals



Al-Hakim with Egyptian Singer, Um Kulthum

Al-Hakim in Politics:
With Former Egyptian Presidents Nasser, Sadat and Mubarak



Above: With President Nasser



Right: With President Sadat and his wife



Al-Hakim with President Mubarak in the 70s and later on in the 1980s

As the above images show, during this intellectual period, authors like al-Hakim and others were encouraged to voice their views and exchange knowledge in social and intellectual gatherings in venues around Cairo and during events held by former President Nasser during his reign (from 1956 to 1970). Many of these gatherings took place in Nasser's own residence in Heliopolis, Cairo as evident in the images below.⁴⁶¹ As a result, each of these authors developed their own interests, influences and left a mark on Modern Egyptian literature and philosophy in one way or the other. What was, however, visible from al-Hakim's career was

⁴⁶¹ See images in chapter one, p. 4 where Nasser plays host to Sartre and de Beauvoir. Nasser preferred holding intellectual events in his Heliopolis palace.

that, unlike others, he did not want to settle for the role of a reformer or a writer who was able only to discuss social, political and cultural matters. Instead, whilst questioning Egyptian values and culture, he made public his own ideas about familiarising Western themes and presented them in his writings in the form of an equilibrium doctrine. This must have been difficult for Al Hakim to do because he had begun to put forward his equilibrium doctrine at this specific period amongst a growing number of fanatics such as the Muslim brothers who came to rise after Nasser's reign ended.⁴⁶² Former President Sadat gave the Muslim brothers' a platform⁴⁶³ (from 1970 to 1981) and allowed their participation in social and political affairs of the country. It is believed that this was his tactic to create an adversary for communism.

Sadat's relationship with al-Hakim was one that continued to be in decline. When al-Hakim published *The Return of Consciousness* in 1974, highlighting flaws in Nasser's policies and traits of dictatorship, Sadat thought that this would have been the start of their friendship. Al Hakim soon after began writing articles in support of students' protests criticising Sadat's policies just the same. Sadat responded by saying that Al Hakim, who was once raised to fame by the country, was now in his old age, deteriorating and losing his senses and leading himself into the abyss.⁴⁶⁴ Their relationship did not improve over the years. Perhaps, the only merit that Sadat contributed to, intentionally or unintentionally was his ambition to move Egypt towards an economic liberalization. This was implemented in the form of "the open door policy" in 1974 referred to as *infitah*.⁴⁶⁵ This *infitah* policy was the beginning of an amicable relationship between the East and the West as well as intellectual exchanges and social and educational developments in the capital Cairo in the form of new foreign schools, an increase in scholarships, work opportunities abroad. These developments without a doubt benefited both parties. Although there were moments of political unrest and, surely doubt regarding these developments, Sadat's decision was probably one of the first to have given the Egyptian people the opportunity to experience socially, economically and intellectually an "openness" to other cultures; something that many today still question and wonder if it was the right move.

⁴⁶² Nasser was aware of the Muslim brothers' influences and thus, during his reign, he kept a watchful eye on their activities until they succeeded in assassinating him.

⁴⁶³ They were also responsible for the assassination of former President Sadat.

⁴⁶⁴ Documentary in Arabic language about al-Hakim available on: (Part One) http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detailpage&v=BejzPWqaCuI.

⁴⁶⁵ Sadat's policy (or "infitah" translates to "openness") intended to "open the universe....open the door for fresh air and remove all the barriers and walls that [were] built around [Egyptians]" (Sadat 1981: 12) Speech available on: <http://sadat.umd.edu/archives/speeches.htm>.

Egyptian existentialist, Abdel Rahman Badawi

This is an excerpt of Badawi's work from Hassan Hanafi's article in Al Ahram newspaper which offers insightful information on the philosopher and his work.⁴⁶⁶

(Left) Image of the front cover of Badawi's book, *Sirat Hyatti* (*The Story of my life*), (Middle) The front cover of his work (in Arabic) titled "*Nietzsche: Kholasat al- Fikir al-Urubi*" (*Nietzsche: a summary of European Thought*) published in 1975, and (Right) front cover of his translation of Goethe's *Faust* that al-Hakim read and that inspired his short-story.



Badawi's "Islamic Studies" is a series of books in which he undertook editing as well as writing, rewriting and translation. He edited and published old Arabic translations⁴⁶⁷ of Western and East philosophers like Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus, and texts by Avicenna, Averroes, al-Ghazali, al-Bastami, al-Tawhidi, Maskouiah, al-Mubbashir Bin Faek, Ibn Sab'in and Abu Soliman al-Mantiqi, one to name a few. He translated many orientalist's work on Greek heritage in Islamic civilisation. He wrote on topics such as the perfect person, Shi'ite theology, Ibn Arabi's thought and the spirit of Arab civilisation. Controversial works include the history of atheism in Islam, humanism and existentialism in Arab thought (the latter being the most creative book on that topic from the view of Arab scholars because he deals with the issue of Western and Arab intellectual heritage). He also draws links between Hazim al-Qartajani (Islamic philosopher) and Aristotle, probing the influences of the Sufi prostitute-turned- Saint Rabaa al-Adawiya. He addressed constantly the Arab role in the genesis of the Western intellect. His work, "The Hundred Pearls," is a series which are translations of German

⁴⁶⁶ Al- Ahram Weekly Online, 29th August- 4 Sept. 2002, Issue No. 601.

⁴⁶⁷ Genuine and apocryphal.

Romantic literature. It incorporates translations of Spanish and French literature, as well as occasional translations produced by him with reference to particular events and circumstances. *Nietzsche: a summary of European Thought* covers logic, poetry and the methodology of research and translation. He invented a form of literary collage that combines translation with presentation and adaptation: *Historical Criticism*. It is said that this book is neither an original composition nor a faithful translation. In his text, he openly discusses both the pillars of modern (German) philosophy, i.e. Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, Spengler and the various "seasons" of Greek thought, classifying them in the manner of Ahmad Amin's history of Islam (which uses the metaphor of times of day rather than that of seasons). Perhaps it is fair to say that all in all, he was a very active intellectual who wrote 27 titles and translated 22, which is said to be a slightly smaller portion of his total output. These books reveal Badawi's fascination with the West, especially Germany, which he considered to be the very centre of the world.



The young Badawi in France



Badawi in Kuwait

Tawfiq Al Hakim's *Tahadiyat Sanat- Alfain (Challenges of the year 2000)*

Dar Misr Press. (1980)

Sub title: Al Thawri wal- Multazim. "The Revolutionist and the Committed"
(Pages. 178- 181)

Donkey: I hear often many words that I do not understand their meaning. A humble creature like myself prefers honest clear and particular meanings to words. Take for instance, the words, "revolutionist" and "committed" and "revolutionary" and "commitment". What are the meanings to them?

Beret answers: I explain to you. Assume for example that someone presented to you grass muddled with earth what will you do?

Donkey: I will object and threw it in his face.

Beret: But this is not enough and would not be a revolt.

The Stick (intervened) saying: I hit him and spill his blood.

Beret: All this would be "violence" and not revolution.

Donkey: What is revolution then?

Beret: Revolution is not violence, regardless of whether violence at times is needed or not.

The Stick: Is this a riddle?

Beret: This is so much simpler. The word's meaning that has been mistaken with others conceals its true meaning.

Donkey: And what is that?

Beret: "Change"

The Stick: "Objection"?

Beret: No, objection is not revolution but merely a cause. The objections to "idols⁴⁶⁸" is not religion, but only a cause for it.

Donkey: Do you mean when I object to eating the grass mixed with the earth, I am not revolting against it?

Beret: Your objection only is negative. But as for revolution it is a positive action. It comes after objection with a vision for change. And then comes the implementation of change.

The stick: The protestor then is not the revolutionary. The protestor may as well be the rioter. He will not be a revolutionary unless he has an ideology for change that can be implemented. If what he suggest is impossible, then his work is similar to that of his objection; namely a passive riot or an illusionary dream. The principle of revolution, in a nutshell, is a vision or a call for change that is possible to implement in a present or near future.

⁴⁶⁸ Meaning worshipping idols

Beret: Yes, in a near future because, in the far future, a vision of change that was once a dream, can be fulfilled. This is how we can distinguish the instrumental revolution from the revolution of ideas. The instrumental revolution is fulfilled in the present or the near future, whilst the revolution of ideas, its effects, emerge after many years. It stay in the conscious of the people till it dissolves, even if the instrumental revolution may have led to the latter.

The stick: Every revolution must either be a product of a true revolution of ideas which is like its seeds and roots, or it will be merely like a wind that extracts every plant from its roots.

Donkey: We now understand revolution, what is then “commitment”?

Beret: Commitment is to hold onto something that happened, and revolution is the vision onto something that will happen.

Donkey: When I hear that an intellectual, a writer or an artist is “committed”, this means he is holding on to (and agreeing with) a direction, an ideology or a position that has already been found, whilst a revolutionist, he is aspiring or seeking change that has not yet been found.

Beret: This is true. Now you have found the answer to what you have been seeking to know.

The stick: And now my dear friend, the donkey, what will you do when you are served the grass mixed with earth?

The donkey: I will revolt of course. This productive revolt, I will demand change according to the available possibilities; namely, for us all to cooperate to remove imperfections.

An excerpt from Al Hakim's *Adab- Al Hayah (The Literature of Life)* 1965

Pages: 133- 137. *Al Rad- 'ala-Sartre (A Response to Sartre)*⁴⁶⁹

It was often said by Jean Paul Sartre that modern Arabic literature must reflect the struggle of its people and that the individual becomes his tool and progress and freedom becomes its goals. All of this is true and there is no debate about it. But isn't this already the message of Modern Arabic literature? Here we slightly differ.

I will leave for my colleagues from Arab writers their right to defend their position and limit my talk to present solely my position. I say: From five or six years, Sartre published long sections in his famous *Les Temps moderne* of my novel *Diary of a Country Prosecutor*. And what is known in France, and internationally, is that Sartre does not publish in his magazine anything that does not present the goals and directions of what he sees as the struggle of the people (a nation), defending humanity and against tyranny, as well as calling for freedom and progress (i.e. social-progress). Since Sartre had indeed published in his magazine this work of Modern Arabic literature, this means that these goals were not overlooked or neglected. It is worth mentioning also that my book was written and published in Egypt and the Middle-East in 1937, meaning before Sartre came to fame and his doctrines became known.

Sartre writes today about the Algerians and blames and criticises his fellow French citizens in an attempt to defend the struggle of the people and the right to freedom. This reminds me of an incident which happened to me a couple of years ago when I travelled by train and witnessed the famine in parts of North Africa. Egypt rushed to send help and aid to the people while France blocked all the routes in order to prevent the aid reaching the affected areas. This left me no choice but to return to France a medal I was awarded for translating some of my works into French. I wrote to the French ambassador a letter objecting on the situation saying that France had ignored the basis for humanity and human freedom, I said:

“What is the meaning of literature if France holds no meaning for humanity and for human freedom? I do not believe that any free intellectual should accept an appreciation from France before it can show a genuine appreciation of the two.”

This was published in national newspapers on the 6th of July 1948. And as a result of this, the French government refused granting me a visa to enter France when I wished to return in 1949. They did not grant me it until the Egyptian government threatened to apply the same policy to those who wish to visit Egypt. This happened to me, a writer whom they claim lives in an 'ivory tower'.

What I would like to say is that the Modern Arabic literature today is on the right course. Perhaps, we, Arab writers, should be more content and should not ask too much of ourselves lest our efforts fall short. I have no doubt that we must communicate our message of progress and of the struggle of the people and of freedom, for the sake of our Arab nation, to a wider audience, with better and effective methods and finer art. Our excuse is possibly that, until this

⁴⁶⁹ First published 1959.

day, we occupy ourselves with renewing our style and artistic means of production, and improving and solving literary and linguistic issues. If we put an end to this stage, we will have plenty of time to delve into the essence of the problem. This latter stage of renovation could have already drained the efforts those who participate in it and contributed to it. It is, thus, essential for a new stage to begin where a new generation emerges and partakes in giving Modern Arabic literature a distinct humane approach and a valuable international meaning. Therefore, I urge everyone to quit occupying oneself with superficialities and to focus on what really matters from the world of literature in our present age.

The hope is in the younger generation of writers today with their awareness of the real goal in hand, they will be able to progress with a bigger message. The youths say that they have no need for style or linguistic aspects of the language as no one today follows those of Gorky or Sartre, but the beauty in style today is in the form and content. The young generation of writers have formed a new style and method which is free from tradition. Some of them have even mocked those who reminded them of traditional methods of writings like form, expression, style and content. They may be in some sense correct. It would be madness for one to ask of them to see things from the perspective of those before them. The nature of progress shows that things change and no one can ask of the new forms of literature to be bound or restricted by the works of olden eras such as the style of Al-Bakri, or Hefny Nasef or even, al-Manfaloty.

Who writes in England today in the style of Saki⁴⁷⁰ and in France in the style of Schopenhauer? No one. In fact, every generation has its own style and way. Our Arab youths are right to object to copy the style or the method of the past generation because they have the right to find their own style and own path. What should not be overlooked, however, by our youths are the resources which are readily available to them to examine before setting off on their own paths. This is an important criticism which is directed at youths today. They want to take a short-cut and separate the past, with its valuable knowledge, from the present, and leave it behind. If youths today investigate first their past and examine different styles of writings, and spent time appreciating the poems of al-Gahez, al-Tabari, Avicenna or Ibn Khaldun, they can then enter a new phase, from old to new, creating their own style in their new era (with strong foundations based on the knowledge of past generations). Had they done so, no one could have criticised them. There is, in my view, no progress without the thorough investigation and knowledge of the past.

⁴⁷⁰ Hector Hugh Munro (1870- 1916)

Al Hakim's *Al Ahadith al-Arba'a*. Translated as *The Four Conversations*:

An introduction to the book and a letter by the publisher.

FOUR SOLILOQUIES WITH ALLAH AND THE RESULTING RELIGIOUS DEBATE

This book "The four soliloquies" includes the four essays published under the title "With and to Allah" and which aroused the well known controversy. These four essays are but a type of soliloquy with Allah the Almighty ... in my special style and according to my culture, expressing my sincere love to Allah.

I do not accept the thought emerged from others without thinking, and also do not take for granted their concepts and ideas which my mind, created for thinking, cannot comprehend and digest.

I do not accept what comes out from the hearts and minds of others without contemplation and thorough testing.

This controversy is but temporary and alien regarding the issue I will discuss in detail due to its importance.

In collecting these four essays in this book, I have decided to delete all the words and lines written as attributions to Allah, putting into consideration the religious sensitivity which I do not want to disturb any believer.

3

I also traced the authenticity of the "Ahadeeth" (1) and ideas mentioned in the four essays because they were described by some eminent Sheikhs (2) as being concocted, weak or non-existing. I went back to the sources from which I got them and became sure that all are authentic and are in the majority of the trusted Islamic sources.

The matter at issue which must be seriously discussed is :

Some savants of religion insist on being the sole shapers of the nation's mentality on the bases of the religious informations they themselves learned from the books they consider authentic only in the light of the parts they have read and approved ... they read them in their own way, i.e, isolated from any up-to-date knowledge and contributions.

At the same time they do not permit others to lead and shape the people's mentality on the bases of contemporary science and culture unless they approve and supervise, whereas they themselves are isolated from the dynamism of thought in its successive times, and without distinguishing between what is stable in religion and what is renewable with the change of time and place.

At the same time we find that thinkers and scien-

(1) Sayings of Prophet Muhammad. (Translator).

(2) The "sheikh" is the Islamic man of religion.

4

tists are of the opinion that all the human elements, concerned with man's mental and emotional activities, whether being religious, scientific thought, literature, art and culture, and which cope with the changing times, must participate in shaping the nation's mentality as long as Islam is suitable for every time and place.

The main dispute between some sheikhs and men of contemporary thought is : these sheikhs depend only on the science and culture that were available in the age of Prophet Muhammad and according to their own criteria. Whilst the men of thought depend also upon them and add the recent achievements in science and culture.

The tradition of our forebears is but the product of human minds and hearts lived during cultural findings different from ours due to the additions of our renewable life.

Therefore, we should not confine ourselves only to these early findings and make them curb our thinking, or make them a limit beyond which we can not exceed. Thus making us turn for hundreds of years in a vicious circle around one age as if Islam were not suitable except for that age with its ideas and circumstances.

We have not to base our ideas only on the first age of Islam and forget that Islam is suitable for and suits all the times because it is flexible and suits life and progress in all the ages, times and places.

Allah the Almighty is the Greatest, his knowledge is wider, his mercy is deeper and his forgiveness is broader.

Tawfik Al-Hakim

Shaaban 1403, A.H.

May 1983

Translated by : H. H. Mayyas, Ph. D. Ling.
Al-Azhar University

Revised by : J. Cochran, Ph. D. English
Texas University

A LETTER BY THE PUBLISHER

"Man's sense that he is not alone in existence". So did Tawfik Al-Hakim started his journey with the comprehensive belief.

In early childhood he received his Islamic education in "Kuttab" (1) where he recited the Quran. During his study of law, sheikh Zaid, the eminent professor of Islamic Jurisprudence, inspired his mind with the theory of human rights in Islam and its philosophy

In fact two main factors influenced Al-Hakim's thought and literature : the first is his comprehensive and deep reading of the Arabic and Islamic traditions together with the liberal Islamic writers starting from Sheikh Mohammad-Abdou up-to Al-Maraghy. The second factor is his grasp of the western civilization as a result of his stay in Paris in the twenties.

All these factors shaped his thought and as a result he expressed his ideas concerning the conflict between the fact of the heart vis-à-vis, the truth of the intellect.

This led him to diverse conflicts such as that between Man and Time in "The Sleepers of Ephesus" 1933, and that between the Reality and the Truth in "Oedipus", 1949. Between Science and Religion, "In

(1) A sort of pre-elemantry Islamic school. (1)

the year One Million", 1953, and between Science and Art" in "Voyage to Tomorrow", 1957.

Al-Hakim is of the opinion that religion is a main source of thought and inspiration to the man of letters, the thinker and the artist. While "The Sleepers of Ephesus" is based on a Quranic story; (1). "Oedipus" is a new adaptation of Greek tragedy reflecting his eastern view regarding mythology, philosophy and theology.

His book "Muhammad the Messenger, the human" 1936, is a documentary account of the prophet's life. It is translated into English and published under the auspices of the Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs ...

In 1938 Al-Hakim outlined in his essays the meshing of the work of mind with heart feelings. These essays are entitled "Under the Sun of Thinking" ... a considerable part of the book is devoted to belief, religion and its relation to the creative work. Art and religion occupy a great part in his book "The Art of literature" published in 1952. It is amazing to read such chapters as "The Whole Truth", "Revolution of the Mind", "The sky is the Source", "Belief in life" and "the living Water".

"Equilibrium" 1955, is the masterpiece work of mind, where Al-Hakim balanced the contradictions of his philosophical equation. "Allah Alone is the only One, the perfect One. However through his Almighty will,

(1) Or Sura with the same title. (1)

he created a corresponding power : Which is the power of the devil, just to make the human life variable and dynamic. "He wrote.

Tawfik Al-Hakim condensed the most important Islamic book "Tafssir ALKORTOBY" (30 volumes) into one volume including the most important Islamic ideas.

As late as 1977, he felt the need for an Islamic rebirth ... he watched the scene in the area. A new Islamic approach completed his theory of Equilibrium.

It was easy for him to find similar hypothesis in Islam, though he criticized some classical exegesis of the Quranic verses. Islam is suitable for all places and all times, but only if we add present thoughts and evolutions ... this will pave the way for future conclusions.

"With and to Allah" is a new and strange means to be accepted by Moslim fundamentalists nowadays. Therefore his "Four Soliloquies" with Allah, in early 1983, aroused tremendous controversy.

Critics expressed their fears from the possibility of such a means of argumentation and the ideas as well.

Al-Hakim went deep in analysing the humanity of prophets, the limits of man's thinking and the need for cooperation between all human beings neglecting their beliefs or religions. We need all efforts to be closer to reality, to work out our needs for a better life, and finally to sense our being.

Al-Hakim's works count for more than one hundred ... over sixty plays, two, poems, two autobiographies, and it is difficult to count his serious essays, short stories and novels.

W.M. Hutchins (1) quotes in his documentary introduction : "In his comments about his work he has described himself as an Easterner and therefore a spiritual playwright, a social critic and therefore a reformist playwright and a pioneer and therefore a diverse playwright".

M. & A. Aly Hassan

(1) Plays, Prefaces and Postscripts of Tawfik Al-Hakim Vol. 1 - Theatre of the Mind (Three continents Press, 1981 U.S.A).

APPENDIX 2

- Chronology of selected philosophical publications in accordance with the main events in al-Hakim's life.
- Literature Review
- Reputation and readership: Survey and summary of findings
- Interview with Personal Interview with Mr. Muhammed Rifa'at, Assistant editor of October Magazine, writer, journalist and poet.
- Personal Interview with Mr. Muhammed Shamroukh, columnist and writer at *Al-Ahram* Newspaper.
- Original Egyptian newspaper announcements of Sartre and de Beauvoir's visit to Cairo, Egypt and other parts of the Middle East (dates: 1st of March 1967, 22nd of January 1967 and 24th of February, 1967).

Chronology

Al Hakim's Life and Philosophical works

Date	Event	Arabic Titles
1898	Born in Alexandria	
1919 (Egyptian Revolution)	Began writing as a result of political unrest	
1925	Travelled to Paris to study law	
1928	Returned to Egypt upon his father's request	
1938 1938 1938	<i>Under the Sun of Thought:</i> Articles <i>Satan's Era:</i> Philosophical stories <i>My Donkey told me:</i> Philosophical articles	<i>Tahta Shams al-Fikr</i> <i>Himari Qal Li</i>
1941	<i>From the Ivory Tower:</i> Short articles	<i>Min il-Burj il-'Aji</i>
1942	<i>Under the Green lantern:</i> Articles	<i>Tahta al-Misbah al-Akhdar</i>
	Prepared for publication a number of literary projects begun in Paris. Started work as a deputy public prosecutor (na'ib) in the Nile delta area. Then became an official in the ministry of social affairs. And finally, resigned his position as a civil servant to devote himself to his writing.	
1943	<i>The Prime of Life:</i> Autobiography & Letters	<i>Zahrat al-'Umr</i>
1945	<i>The Art of Literature:</i> Articles	<i>Fanna al-Adab</i>
1953	<i>Show me God:</i> Philosophical stories	<i>Arini Allah</i>
1954	<i>Al Hakim's Stick:</i> Dialogic thoughts	<i>'Asa al-Hakim</i>
1955	<i>Equilibrium:</i> Philosophical dialogue	<i>al-Ta'aduliyyah</i>
1964	<i>The Prison of Life:</i> Autobiography	<i>Sijn al-'Umr</i>
1965	<i>Between thought and art:</i> Articles	<i>Bayn al-Fikr wa al-Fann</i>
1965	<i>The literature of Life:</i> Articles	<i>Adab al-Hayyah</i>
1967	<i>Our theatrical frame:</i> A Study	<i>Qalabuna al-Masrahi</i>

1972	<i>My Donkey, my stick and others</i>	<i>Himari wa 'asai wa al-Akharun</i>
1974	<i>A Conversation with the planets: Philosophical dialogue</i>	<i>Hadith Ma'a al-Kawkab</i>
1983	<i>Equilibrium and Islam: Philosophical discussions</i>	<i>al- Ta 'aduliyya Wal-Islam</i>
1983	<i>The Four Conversations (with God): Religious philosophical dialogue</i>	<i>al-Ahadith al-Arba 'ah</i>
Unknown	<i>A Conversation with myself and to my reader: articles</i>	<i>Hiwar ma 'a Nafsi wa al-qari'</i>

LITERATURE REVIEW

Western scholars such as H. A. R. Gibb, N. Barbour, K. Shoonover, F. Gabrieli, U. Rizzitano and G. A. Astre,⁴⁷¹ have written a number of valuable studies on al-Hakim's literary work, but very little on his philosophy. These have dealt with the work solely from the view of Arabic literature. This, in my opinion, is also true of what I may call recent Western scholars who also approached al-Hakim's work before and after he died. I found that the works of these scholars did not offer me much material for examining al-Hakim's philosophical doctrine. As for Arab critics, I am in debt to some more than others for giving me biographical information and some critical analysis of al-Hakim's plays that I found useful. Unfortunately, some of these resources have no publication date or author, or are a little dated. Nevertheless, as Victor admitted in his thesis,⁴⁷² I too found Mandur⁴⁷³ and Qutb's work on al-Hakim to be valuable to my work. The first part of this literature review discusses El-Enany's article on al-Hakim and his early works. The second part examines briefly the scholarly contributions of each of Denys Johnson-Davies, William M. Hutchins and Richard Long. They were some of the few who translated and promoted internationally some of al-Hakim's dramatic works and achievements. In doing so, I was able to discover to a certain extent, via biographical material, what authors he read, what plays he saw and what journals or periodicals he read.

The question is why the works of al-Hakim have proved popular in France, unlike England, and why al-Hakim's works were once widely translated into many languages? My feeling is that al-Hakim's philosophy is (and possibly has been for a long while) an area that has been intentionally avoided, if not ignored by both Eastern and Western scholars for reasons that I intend to discover.⁴⁷⁴ Al-Hakim was a skilful writer of fiction who used his surroundings for inspiration. A talent perhaps that makes my task, like those before me who were interested in him, very difficult. The sum of bewildering ideas in its variety and wealth and range shows al-Hakim's

⁴⁷¹ These are noted in G. V. Tutungi's unpublished doctoral thesis on al-Hakim in 1966 which is a comparative study submitted to the Comparative literature department at Indiana University.

⁴⁷² Doctoral thesis by G. V. Tutungi submitted in 1966 to Indiana University titled "Tawfiq al-Hakim and The West" as a comparative study of a few of al-Hakim's novels.

⁴⁷³ Indicated that al-Hakim was keen to imitate Shaw and Ibsen in his writings. See G. V. Tutungi's preface (iv)

⁴⁷⁴ My feeling at this stage is that Eastern critics avoid any discussion of Al-Hakim's philosophy due to past accusations against him, i.e. heresy, delusion and others, while Western critics avoid tackling it mainly due to the lack of knowledge of the language and the cultural barriers that they will have to overcome to pursue such a project. This is all in addition to the lack of resources, poor publication of al-Hakim's work and finding a publisher for such a project.

hope to provide, as he mentions in one of his works, “food for all mankind”.⁴⁷⁵ The assimilation of ideas and ability to make what he liked his own has, without a doubt, led to many confusions and contradictions in his writings (and in interpreting his work). To overcome some confusion, perhaps his equilibrium doctrine is one that is best read as a comprehensive work of ideas rather than a work that argues for a single idea. This shows that he is influenced by a number of Western movements as well as social and political events that shaped his character over several years. In Davies’ *The Essential Tawfiq al-Hakim* (2008) it is claimed that theatre in Egypt was regarded as a source of a simple entertainment that was conducted in the colloquial language to appeal to a general audience. It was not until Al-Hakim came on the scene that recognition was given to the purely imaginative genres of writing like novels or short-stories.⁴⁷⁶ And whilst the Arabian Nights was regarded as a masterpiece of story-telling in the West, it was not mentioned in Arabic books of literary criticism or recognised as a work of literature in the Arab world. Davies concedes that thanks to al-Hakim’s efforts in Egypt, plays, novels and short-stories were brought together as part of the modern Arabic literature and drama was included into the literary canon.⁴⁷⁷ It was of course unfortunate that the many plays al-Hakim wrote back in 1930s and 1940s were only available in print in Arabic and only a few were translated to French by al-Hakim himself. Although these early plays were written to be read, it is possible to say that the birth of professional theatre in Egypt may have begun with al-Hakim’s plays. A few of al-Hakim’s early plays were first staged in Cairo and other capitals of the Arab world in the late 1940s.⁴⁷⁸ One could possibly say that the aim of Davies’ book is to provide its readers with a great general introduction to an Egyptian literary pioneer more than anything else. The book neither claims to give readers the information in order to endeavour on a life time research nor does it claim to aid readers’ understanding of al-Hakim’s philosophy, his drama, or relationship with the West.

In Hutchins’ *Tawfiq al-Hakim: A Reader’s Guide* (2003), on the other hand, it is claimed that due to the range or diversity of al-Hakim’s works, one can easily detect recurring themes in his writings, spiritual or social. Al-Hakim’s common approach of “picture yourself or what-if-you” approach, according to Hutchins, is typical of his ‘science fiction strategy’ in

⁴⁷⁵ I see this research as one that will appeal to a wider audience of those interested in al-Hakim’s work (i.e. national and international specialist scholars and students of Modern literature or interdisciplinary studies of the Middle East, as well as those from either disciplines; literature or philosophy, or both).

⁴⁷⁶ *The Essential Tawfiq al-Hakim* (2008) Edited by Denys Johnson- Davies. AUC Press, pp. 2-3

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid, p.2

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid

different types of plays. The scenarios, for instance, are as follows: a “hero is typically presented as an ordinary individual confronted by a thought provoking situation. The audience are challenged to think through the hero’s quandary with him and sense the necessity of making moral choices.”⁴⁷⁹ This description is typical of plays such as *Food for the Millions*, *The Sultan’s Dilemma*, *The Tree Climber*, *The Fate of the Cockroach*,⁴⁸⁰ and *The People of the Cave*. Even in al-Hakim’s version of *King Oedipus*, he explains in the play’s postscript that aside from the supernatural aspects, Oedipus should be seen as though he were the boy next door.⁴⁸¹ Hutchins, although sympathetic, questions whether the “removal of the original or legendary colours of characters leaves the eternal verities pallid? Or does the mixture of truth with emotion or the ideal with the natural sentimentalize the classics, or, on the contrary, add a new dimension?”⁴⁸² Both I would say are true of al-Hakim’s characters. The classic characters are not only romanticized in such a way that human emotions are revealed, but also such a technique enables readers to sympathise with, and relate to, the problems that the characters face. Al-Hakim was clearly aware that his audience are the ordinary every day persons from different paths of life who appreciate a protagonist who goes through familiar experiences and difficulties, and is capable of reflecting on life and show the imperfections of being human. Thus, Hutchins’ scepticism concerning al-Hakim’s technique is one which overlooks the simplicity of al-Hakim’s writings, a trait, perhaps that he, as a writer and philosopher, should have been commended for, not criticised.

Moreover, it is very unfortunate that a few readers or critics have neglected al-Hakim’s work on the basis that he is an ‘easy-read’ because of his style and technique. Hutchins’ assessment reduces al-Hakim to the role of a representative of Islamic philosophy and/ or Egyptian culture. This can easily create the same kind of stereotype that Hutchins wants to deconstruct in comparisons between Egyptian Arab writers. Hutchins did not take into consideration the signs that point towards al-Hakim’s deep immersion in European literary tradition besides his foreign roots, his education and his foreign adaptations. These signs are evident more clearly in al-Hakim’s philosophical narratives of the mid-50s and in his doctrine than in his other writings. What a few readers and critics equally have ignored (which I consider

⁴⁷⁹ Hutchins William. M. (2003) *Tawfiq al-Hakim: A Reader's Guide*. Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc. p.113

⁴⁸⁰ Recurrent themes and conflicts in this play are gender, class and as some critics claim, the political East vs. the West. The ontological question of the value of man's life is said to be echoing Kierkegaard and focuses on individualism and the idea that you are responsible for your own outcome in life.

⁴⁸¹ Hutchins’ endnote: “The case of a brother and a sister separated through adoption, reunited by marriage then charged with incest was close to the spirit of al-Hakim’s *Udib* (Oedipus). This was also a recurring story line in many Egyptian heritage and folktales.

⁴⁸² *Ibid*, p. 114

what survived throughout the years) is the relevance of al-Hakim's underlying philosophy. On the one hand, I cannot entirely disagree with Hutchins that "Arab critics have excelled in developing strategies for understanding [al-Hakim's works]".⁴⁸³ Yet, their negligence lay not in misunderstanding the works as much as it did in their misreading and misinterpreting what al-Hakim said or intended. On the other hand, Western critics seem to have been equally selective in the sense that they intentionally overlooked some of al-Hakim's works in favour of other works. In this connection, it must be mentioned that the ambiguity in al-Hakim's style and the contradictions in his works have certainly affected the amount of scholarly work devoted to investigating his philosophy. The mistake on his part is perhaps that he believed himself to be unbound by literary techniques and common restrictions on writing with regards to style, form and content. His emphasis instead was on a style which portrayed aspects of 'ordinary' characters who embodied various ideas and lived a life of struggle as a result of making moral choices affecting themselves and others.

Last but not least, in Long's *Tawfiq al-Hakim, playwright of Egypt* (1979) it is claimed that the purpose of his book is to fill a gap in British writing about the Middle East and to aid specialists' understanding of an important transitional period in modern Arabic literature. Yet he suggests right from the beginning that al-Hakim had made his mark "by drawing selective inspiration from the 'melting-pot'⁴⁸⁴ of the contemporary Egyptian stage and not by bringing to the light of day much that was original."⁴⁸⁵ Long's view strikes me as one that has been made in haste about such a remarkable author like al-Hakim. I have had to question the reasons behind Long's view and from his preface I have concluded that although he started writing his book in 1962, it was not published until 1979; this means that the finished work did not take proper account of the intervening period. For between these dates, a number of events had drastically affected al-Hakim and his career. First, his reputation was affected by publishing his controversial works, *Arini Allah* in 1953 and later on, in 1955, *al-Ta'aduliya* which explicitly outlines and explains his philosophical doctrine in relation to the existence of divine forces and questions, accordingly, the extent of one's freedom. These works angered many clerics and other members of the religious establishment as well as members of the public and fellow writers.⁴⁸⁶

⁴⁸³ Hutchins, p. 189

⁴⁸⁴ Also the title of one of his chapters which automatically insinuates his argument (i.e. that there is nothing original about Al-Hakim)

⁴⁸⁵ Long, Richard (1979) *Tawfiq Al-Hakim, Playwright of Egypt*. Ithaca Press, p. 9

⁴⁸⁶ See chapter one for an excerpt of a letter sent to Al-Hakim's publisher by an angry reader. Also see my final chapter titled "Criticisms and Misconceptions".

Moreover, in 1974, al-Hakim was also criticised for publishing *'Awdat al- Wa'y* (*The Return of Consciousness*) which is a political reminiscences condemning the policies of the late President Nasser; as a result people accused him of disloyalty. In fact, he was honoured and given medals by Nasser during his reign, and he did not criticise Nasser's character as much as his policies and decisions which in his view led to catastrophic economic and political failures.⁴⁸⁷ The critique, published after Nasser's death, caused sharp controversy because of Nasser's reputation as a charismatic hero and an intellectual who had encouraged writers to speak openly on all matters of the state. With this said, I, therefore, suspect that Long's investigation of al-Hakim at the time was affected by the mixed reputation he had acquired over this period. This is not to say, however, that I am not in debt to Long's book, quite the contrary. His work provided me with comprehensive information regarding influential events in al-Hakim's life and early upbringing. Although Long overlooks al-Hakim's philosophical doctrine and its impact on his literary career, it has helped me pin-point the exact period in which al-Hakim began to shift in tone and style, from drama to experimenting with philosophical narratives. It is a shame that Long only discussed al-Hakim's preoccupation with the subject of time and place briefly in part two of his book. Instead of offering a philosophical analysis, he provides a synopsis of some of al-Hakim's dramatic plays in the hope that his readers will be able to extract from them the recurring ideas and "philosophical themes". The plays in question were *Ahl al-Kahf*, *al-Malik Udib* and *Rihla ila al-mustaqbal* (*Journey into the Future*). These early plays were presented by Long as ones that were given less consideration by the public, critics and by al-Hakim himself who admittedly doubted the future of his plays.⁴⁸⁸ It is noteworthy to mention that these plays, as many other plays of al-Hakim, were not widely in print at the time and some were altered in 1952 or completed on one of al-Hakim's multiple trips to France or to parts of Europe.

To conclude, I hope that by identifying the scholarly work on al-Hakim and some of his work and by showing some of the factors that were in his disfavour whether from his upbringing or during 1952 after Nasser's reign ended in the early 70s, it has become clear that his reputation suffered and that he was, indeed, far from defending it. His 'ivory tower reaction' to his work's rejection, his quiet character, his somehow passive stance among his cultural

⁴⁸⁷ i.e. "Al-Naksa" (the Arab defeat) In 1967 Israel defeated Egypt.

⁴⁸⁸ See al-Hakim, Tawfiq. (1992) *Sijn al Umr* (*The Prison of life: An autobiographical essay*) Translated by Pierre Cachia. American University in Cairo (AUC) Press.

brothers-in-arms and his misunderstood objection that some of his best plays were designed only for reading”⁴⁸⁹ did not aid his cause.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid, p.179

Reputation and readership: Survey findings and summary of results

Here, I examine the author's reputation and readership from data collated from a focused group survey. The results of the survey and all my findings to date are available in the following section.

Al-Hakim had a very mixed reputation. He was a playwright, a novelist, a journalist, a short-story writer and/or reluctantly referred to as a philosopher. Not to forget having been called a "misogynist" and yet an advocate for women. And he had also been known to be a tight-fisted jurist. It is indeed difficult to pin-point all of al-Hakim's works to one specific genre. From looking at my timeline, from the early 30s, he was generally regarded in Egypt as a mere playwright at a time when people preferred to read novels because of the greater delineation of characters and complex plots. "His incentive to write during this period came more and more from the increasing attention drawn to the theatre by plays of Farah Antun, Muhammad Lutfi Goma'a, Ibrahim Ramzi and Muhammad Taymur."⁴⁹⁰ Rapidly his pen-name "Husayn Tawfiq" used only to conceal his identity from his parents began to be known in Cairo stage circles. It is unknown how his parents came to discover the truth of his identity, but their disapproval clearly had little, if any, effect on his writings. In fact, he had already started at the time to experiment with philosophical narratives in the form of philosophical short-stories and essays. He wrote *Himari qal-li* published in 1938 and *Bruxa wa mushkelat al-hukm* an essay published in 1939. In my opinion, these two books did not receive the due consideration they deserved neither by the public nor by critics. The reason being is due to the interest that had already sparked in his two novels *Yawmiyat Na'ib fil aryaf* (1937) and *'Usfur min al-Sharq* (1938) published around the same time, that critics began to see him more as a novelist.

Regardless of the success or rejection of his works, he continued to write extensively. Some of his works were published, other works were never completed and some were never to be found. The ones that were made public exceeded 80 works of plays, novels, short-stories, essays and articles. Critics disagreed in their discussions of al-Hakim's work. Muhammad al Sayyid is a critic who continued to consider al-Hakim to be a pioneering short-story writer and associated his works with the 1930s philosophic school of writing that saw the role of the story as an expression of philosophic thought more than anything else.⁴⁹¹ Whereas critics who continued to consider him more of a dramatist argued that he should have been awarded the Nobel Prize for his contribution to Egyptian modern literature before he passed away in 1987.

⁴⁹⁰ Long, Richard (1979) *Tawfiq al-Hakim, Playwright of Egypt*. Ithaca Press, p. 8.

⁴⁹¹ Hutchins, William. M. (2003) *Tawfiq al-Hakim: A Reader's Guide*. Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc.

Although this is recognition of al-Hakim's efforts, it is unfortunate that till our present day his reputation and readership, nationally and internationally, is still affected by the negative social stigma affixed to him and his philosophy. This of course was due to the controversial contents of the following publications: *Arini Allah* (1953), *al-Ta'aduliya* (1955), *Hiwar ma' al-kawakib* (1974), *al-Ta'aduliya wal-Islam* (1983) and *Al Ahadith al-arba'a* (1983). These works expressed openly what many saw and continued to see as unconventional and highly controversial ideas regarding Egyptian social norms, customs and more importantly, Islamic faith. As a result, al-Hakim was accused by clergymen and religious establishments of heresy, misguidance and delusion and the majority of his books were banned. Al-Hakim, as a consequence, wrote in response to many criticisms in his introduction to the latter work that he had revisited his writings in order to check the validity of the religious versus that he had used to support his claims. He argued that the verses that he had relied on and used in his works (mainly in *al-Ta'aduliya wal-Islam* published 1983) were *all* valid and they have been widely used and were also available in many religious texts. This was the first time that he directly addressed clergymen and critics in order to clarify his position and the validity of his quotations and truths behind his claims. He wrote in response in 1983 also that it is always a shame that "clergymen want to have the sole authority in shaping the minds of the nation based on their own readings, education and agendas. They do not accept an outsider's observation or opinion on matters that concern religion and its progress in a changeable time."⁴⁹²

Although he responded to a few criticisms in his writings, there was no doubt that his readership has been negatively affected by latter philosophical publications more than others. From looking at my own translation of an excerpt from Gamal al-Gheitany's book, *Tawfiq al-Hakim Reminisces*,⁴⁹³ below, published by the Supreme Council of Culture in 1998 and only available in Arabic, we are given an account of the public and colleagues' reaction to the author's philosophical works published in this period. I speculate that the controversy was at its peak after the publication of the al-Hakim's last philosophical work, *Al Ahadith al-arba'a* published in 1983. This is due to the book's content. Al-Hakim had explicitly claimed to have had a conversation with God, something which the public found outrageous and blasphemous. The work was shunned by religious establishments and banned, like many others, from publication due to what it showed from the author's boldness in addressing religious issues. A particular comment, mentioned in Gheitany's book, was that the general public and others were

⁴⁹² My translation of an excerpt from al-Hakim's book *Al Ahadith al- arba'a (The Four Conversations)*, 1983.

⁴⁹³ Gamal El-Gheitany was a writer and a friend of al-Hakim since 1959 as mentioned in his preface of his book, *Tawfiq al-Hakim Reminisces*. Cairo: Supreme Council of Culture, 1998. P.183.

also shocked at “the extent of Al-Hakim’s imagination”. Little did al-Hakim know at the time he published the work that his daring attitude and courage to question all that is unknown would be so unwelcomed by many. The excerpt below was, therefore, one of many examples of hostility and critic which the author received. The scale of controversy and attacks on the author after his last philosophical publication was indeed unimaginable. I can only hope that my readers will be able to sense the strain on the author and the shock expressed by colleagues, critics, clergymen and, of course, the general public, to whom al-Hakim angered.

Many letters arrived for al-Hakim after he was accused by Shaykh Muhammed Metwaly al-Sha’rawi (of al-Azhar University) of “heresy and delusion”⁴⁹⁴ Most of these letters wondered what had happened to al-Hakim. With good intentions, the correspondents expressed their sincere remorse to what had affected al-Hakim in his final years of his life. Some letters expressed their belief in al-Hakim’s strong faith and denied the possibility of a Muslim, like al-Hakim, disbelieving another Muslim. Many of these letters also reached the publisher who was al-Hakim’s sole publisher⁴⁹⁵ at the time since the 30s. The publisher, in response, decided to publish four pages of clarification titled “al-Hakim’s Islam” with every copy of al-Hakim’s work. These pages aimed to entail clearly al-Hakim’s relationship with religion, his intentions and the extent of his directions and ideas. With the enlightenment that came with 1919 revolution, al-Hakim, like others, saw the holy Quran as a source of both, divine and humanely knowledge, as well as source of literature and thought that one should take inspiration from. Books like *Muhammed* written by Dr. Haykal and *On the Margins of the Prophetic Biography* by Dr. Hussein and *Muhammed, The Human Prophet* by al-Hakim, were all dependent on versus from the Quran and hadiths.

Today, in Egypt and Middle Eastern countries, al-Hakim’s reputation as an author is known amongst specific social groups such as students, intellectuals, academics and the older generations who may have studied Arabic literature and drama or came across the author’s works out of sheer interest. Although there is an apparent trend of intellectual youths who have read one or two of al-Hakim’s works out of interest or as part of education, they still seem to be a minority, perhaps due to the fact that many of the author’s works have *not* been available for a very long period in print. This shows that there is an opportunity to revive al-Hakim’s philosophical work in order for the majority of the public to have access to and enjoy reading. As Egypt has recently been undergoing vast social, intellectual and political changes since January 2011 revolution, introducing al-Hakim and his philosophical doctrine both, nationally and internationally, will allow all those who wished to investigate his doctrine or his

⁴⁹⁴ The exact word in Arabic is (Ed-lal) “اضلال”. It carries within it all the following meanings: misguidance, diversion from true religion, delusion due to old age and fabrication.

⁴⁹⁵ I believe his sole publisher was his son-in-law, Muhammed Ali Hasan of al-Adab Press who died in 1985.

philosophical works in an exchange of ideas which may form a kind of an intellectual revolution. It is vital, of course that the author is presented in an unbiased light contrary to his past reputation and with clarifications on his doctrine and approach to his work. This will, accordingly, shed light on fundamental aspects of his doctrine in relation to the Egyptian society and Islamic faith as well as trends or shifts in attitudes towards the West. Moreover, both Eastern and Western scholars will be able to have access to English translations of the author's philosophical text, *Equilibrium*, which will enable them to have a better grasp of the doctrine and other philosophical works' contents.

Besides, what I also concluded from my survey is that some of Tawfiq al-Hakim's dramatic works were known to those who have been keen on reading them out of sheer interest and *not* just as part of receiving an Egyptian education. Unfortunately, although some Egyptian universities and schools try to keep one or two of his books, usually a work of drama, on their Arabic literature curriculum, not many continue to do so and students do not pay enough attention to the importance of the work or even make note of the author's identity. In fact, I have asked whilst in Egypt some of the younger generations if they were familiar with the author's name. And to my disappointment, the majority of those I asked did not know much about the author, whereas others remembered coming across one or two of his works. Those who named a few of his work indicated that they may have had to read one of his books as part of a university course. Al-Hakim's books that made it on the shelves of Egyptian bookstores such as Al-Diwan⁴⁹⁶ bookstore, for instance, were four particular books: *The Essential Tawfiq al-Hakim* (2008),⁴⁹⁷ al-Hakim's play *Ahl al Kahf (The People of the Cave)* 1933,⁴⁹⁸ Al-Hakim's novel *Yawmiyat Na'ib fil Aryaf (A Diary of a Countryside Prosecutor)* published in 1937)⁴⁹⁹ and his autobiographical fiction *'Awdet al-Ruh (The Return of the Spirit)* 1933. Although at the first instance one may think these works are sufficient to spark readers' interest-apart from Davies' book- these few selected works can only provide readers with a general introduction. Readers will, therefore, miss out on the opportunity of comprehending the extent of Al-Hakim's progression of thought from the early 30s to the period before his death in the late 80s. Also, readers will not be able to realise the importance of the texts given the context they

⁴⁹⁶ <http://www.diwanegypt.com/>

⁴⁹⁷ By Denys Johnson Davies published by The American University in Cairo (AUC Press), Egypt.

⁴⁹⁸ Translated to English by Mahmoud El Lozy and published by ELIAS Press, (See http://www.eliaspublishing.com/other_books/cave.html).

⁴⁹⁹ Also referred to as *The Maze of Justice*, published in English by Saqi Books and reprinted in 1985.

were published in. It is only recently that Dar al-Shorouk Press⁵⁰⁰ had begun a project of reprinting some of al-Hakim's selected works in hope of reviving his narratives and keeping the Egyptian theatre heritage alive, just as al-Hakim desired.⁵⁰¹

I can only assume that the reason why some of al-Hakim's works have been neglected was due to the lack of encouragement from tutors, parents, publishers, bookstore owners and perhaps from also educational establishments as a whole. It is true that the systems in place do *not* allow for students to learn more about their own literary heritage. Not to mention the limited resources and the inaccessibility of al-Hakim's work over the past years and, of course, in our present day. This kind of negligence is *not* a modern phenomenon, but has been a flaw in the Egyptian educational systems for centuries. Al-Hakim personally commented about this issue in his critic of his Egyptian education in comparison to the education he had witnessed in the West. He wrote, "School did everything to make literature distasteful to me and to make me afraid of language. It set before me the most loathsome (from point of meaning and thought) of Arabic books, the most difficult in language and composition and the least suitable for introducing a budding spirit to the beauty of creation."⁵⁰² It is a shame that still to our present day this view is shared by the younger generations in Egypt and, perhaps also is a view shared by those who were fortunate enough to experience and compare, like al-Hakim, between different educational systems, such as governmental schools with rigid curriculum in contrast with private schools with a lenient approach of mixing ideas and traditions from international curriculums.

⁵⁰⁰ An independent Egyptian publishing house established in 1968 by Muhammed al-Mo'alleem, one of the founding fathers of modern publishing in Egypt and the Arab World who started his publishing career in 1942. (See <http://www.linkedin.com/company/dar-al-shorouk>).

⁵⁰¹ Muhammed Salmawi, President of the writers' union of Egypt (See http://Muhammedsalmawy.com/cv_en.htm) comment on Dar al-Shorouk Press project of reprinting Al-Hakim's works. www.Shourouk.com.

⁵⁰² Long, Richard (1979) *Tawfiq Al-Hakim, Playwright of Egypt*. Ithaca Press, p.5.

Summary of the Survey

The methodology used in this survey was to collate data from a focused group of respondents who took part in the survey by following a link in order to answer a set of closed ended questions. Respondents also had the opportunity to leave a comment or a clarification if they wished.

The link to the survey [https://www.surveymonkey.com/analyze/?survey_id=45877922] was posted on the 3rd of November 2013 on a social network website. By end of Dec 2013, the respondents have reached 25 respondents. Friends and family were encouraged to share the link and/or post it on their own social media page in order to maximise the range of responses in terms of age groups, backgrounds, professions and regional areas. It is worth noting here that a question that would have explicitly identified the respondents' location or country of birth have *not* been included in the survey. The reason being is because I felt that finding out where the respondent resided or country of birth was *not* as essential as knowing the year in which respondents were born in and how much they knew about the author and his work. The objectives of the survey aimed to identify the following:

- The age group of readers.
- The author's general reputation, familiarity and how he *is* identified in our present day.
- The scale of readership within the period that he had been actively publishing in, i.e. from the 1940s to late 1980s.
- The extent of readers' knowledge and awareness of his works in general and his philosophical narratives, in particular.
- The target audience today.

The data collated showed two main age groups; those born from 1966 to 1980 and those born from 1980 to 1993. The general consensus was that the majority of respondents identified Al-Hakim as an author, a writer, an intellectual or a thinker. Only one respondent have explicitly referred to the author as a "philosopher" whereas another respondent referred to the author as "a modern intellectual". Only a handful of respondents referred to the author as a novelist and were able to mention a few of the iconic novels that he had written, such as *Yawmiyat Nai'b fil aryaf* (1937) and *'Usfur min al-Sharq* (1938). The majority of respondents identified Al-Hakim as a playwright and showed familiarity with the author's works by mentioning his iconic plays such as *Ahl al- Kahf* (1933), *al-Malik Udib* (1949), *Masir Sirsar* (1966) and *al-Himer* (1975). The latter was the last collection of plays published by al-Hakim himself.

The survey showed that responses have only differed slightly from one another. First of all, although a few respondents identified al-Hakim as a novelist, they have only mentioned in their comments the author's collections of short-stories such as *Laylat al Zifaf* published in 1966, besides two of the author's plays that were also mentioned before by other respondents, these were *al-Malik Udib* and *al-Himer*. Secondly, it was surprising to find out that '*Awdet al-Ruh* published in 1933, was only mentioned once by one specific respondent who was born in the year 1975. Although the book has been widely publicised and has been in print as one of the author's major novels, it was *not* mentioned by other respondents. Therefore, it was clear to me from these responses that respondents were unclear about the author's genres. And in order for them to show their familiarity with the author or his works, they have simply mentioned the books that they had come across, read or seen regardless of its genre. This, of course, have revealed how some works have been widely available more than others and also, raises the question of who determines the works that appears on the shelves of libraries and bookstores and on what basis is the selection process.

Moreover, al-Hakim was referred to by one or two respondents as an advocate for emancipating women because although he was known to be a "misogynist" for many reasons, he wrote in 1956, as part of a collection of plays titled *al- Masrah al munawa'* (*The Diverse Theatre*), a book titled *The New Woman*. It is believed that this book has given the Egyptian advocate Qasim Amine the idea of campaigning for women rights in Egypt. Al-Hakim was, of course, not as explicit about his views as Amine was, perhaps due to the negative stigma and social pressures he had already suffered during this period. Nevertheless, one cannot deny that *al- Mar'a al-gadida* (*The New Woman*) was the first work of its kind by al-Hakim to have identified explicitly that there was indeed a need to explore women's status in the Egyptian society. Respondents who were *not* familiar at all with al-Hakim's works or his name were mainly those born in the latter group identified above. I can only assume that the reason for their unfamiliarity with the author was due to the religious controversies and negative publicity that was assigned to his philosophical doctrine which seem to have tarnished to a certain extent his general reputation, as well as the availability of his publications in print, especially in the last few years and in the period right before he passed away. Besides, on a personal note, al-Hakim was also stereotyped by some critics and fellow writers to be tight fisted with money. One respondent identified him as a "stingy" writer in one of the survey questions. This was a trait that the author himself strongly denied on many occasions and members of his family and close friends disagreed with and defended him.

To conclude, it has become apparent from this survey that it is not a difficult task for one to determine the extent of readers' knowledge and awareness of al-Hakim's works in general and his philosophical narratives, in particular. Respondents who showed knowledge and awareness of al-Hakim's works mentioned the following iconic works that were all indeed in print for a long period, mainly because they are a work of fiction, theatre or drama. Here is a list of the works mentioned:

- Novels: *Yawmiyat Nai'b fil aryaf* (1937) and *'Usfur min al-Sharq* (1938)
- Plays: *Ahl al-Kahf* (1933), *al-Malik Udib* (1949), *Masir Sirsar* (1966) and *al-Himer* (1975) which was the last collection of plays published by al-Hakim before he abandoned writing plays and theatre.
- Short-stories collection: *Laylat al-Zifaf* (1966).

These works, to conclude, show that audience's familiarity with Al-Hakim is one that is shaped by preconceptions and what publishers or bookstore owners direct them towards reading. A philosophical work evidently is, and sadly continues to be, a work that is avoided by the majority of the general public. And even though one could clearly see through the results of the survey that although al-Hakim is known today to the majority as a writer/author, and only to the very few as a philosopher, there is still a need to highlight, as well as clarify, his reputation as a philosopher in a positive manner. To clarify this further, in the survey, there were no mention of any of al-Hakim's philosophical narratives or even a mention of his doctrine of equilibrium which I believe was the main cause for the relapse in his literary and philosophical career. The ban on his works caused the works to vanish swiftly from the 50s to the 80s. And the works continued to be no longer in print till recently. I, of course, appreciate and applaud the efforts of publishers such as Dar al-Shorouk who endeavour to reprint the author's works in a kind of an intellectual movement. The general public today, of all ages, will not only benefit from a thorough investigation of al-Hakim's works of all genres, but also from reading major philosophical works such as *Equilibrium* and others. Luckily, the aim of this research is to encourage a reinvestigation of the philosophical doctrine alongside the dramatic works in addition to providing a clear explanation of Al Hakim's influences and the nature of the attacks and criticisms he had rightly or wrongly received.

Al-Hakim Survey: Respondents: 24 of 24

Q. 1 Do you know who Tawfiq al-Hakim is? If (Yes) briefly say who he is in a few words

- Answered: 24
- Skipped: 0

Answer Choices –	Responses –
Yes	87.50% 21
No	12.50% 3
Total	24
Comments(17) Showing 17 responses	
Writer, jurist 11/6/2013 1:31 AM View respondent's answers One of the greatest and famous Egyptian writers 11/4/2013 9:13 PM View respondent's answers A writer 11/4/2013 11:41 AM View respondent's answers Very famous Egyptian writer and philosopher 11/4/2013 8:26 AM View respondent's answers Writer 11/4/2013 1:53 AM View respondent's answers Writer, stingy (?); 11/4/2013 1:39 AM View respondent's answers A great writer / thinker / novelist	

Answer Choices –	Responses –
11/2/2013 8:20 PM View respondent's answers	He is great Egyptian writer
11/2/2013 8:20 PM View respondent's answers	Egyptian author
11/2/2013 7:59 PM View respondent's answers	Writer
11/1/2013 2:08 PM View respondent's answers	Writer
11/1/2013 2:06 AM View respondent's answers	An Egyptian author and playwright
11/1/2013 1:55 AM View respondent's answers	ب م شهور (retirw suomaF :noitalsnarT) كات
11/1/2013 1:42 AM View respondent's answers	Writer, philosopher and modern Egyptian intellectual
11/1/2013 1:41 AM View respondent's answers	Writer and advocates for emancipating women
11/1/2013 1:27 AM View respondent's answers	An Egyptian writer
11/1/2013 1:22 AM View respondent's answers	Read about him while studying Arabic but can't remember much
10/31/2013 8:57 PM View respondent's answers	

Q. 2 Have you heard of Tawfiq al-Hakim before?

- Answered: 24
- Skipped: 0

Answer Choices –	Responses –
Yes	87.50% 21
No	12.50% 3
Total Respondents: 24	

Q. 3 Have you read any of Tawfiq al-Hakim's books? If (Yes) mention it please in "comment" sections

- Answered: 24
- Skipped: 0

Answer Choices –	Responses –
Yes	50% 12
No	50% 12
Total Respondents: 24	
<u>Comments(9)</u>	

Answer Choices –	Responses –
Showing 9 responses	
<i>Yawmiyyat na'ib fil Aryaf (Diary of a Countryside Prosecutor)</i>	
11/6/2013 1:31 AM View respondent's answers	
I'm sorry. I can't remember	
11/4/2013 5:34 PM View respondent's answers	
‘Awdat al-Ruh , Ahl al-Kahf (<i>The Return of the Spirit, The People of the Cave</i>)	
11/4/2013 2:03 AM View respondent's answers	
<i>Masir Sirsar (The Fate of a Cockroach)</i>	
11/4/2013 1:39 AM View respondent's answers	
حمار الحكيم، ليلة الزفاف، الحمير، الملك أوديب	
Translation: Al-Hakim's <i>al-Himer (The Donkeys)</i> , <i>Laylat al Zifaf (The Wedding Night)</i> , <i>al-Malik Udib (King Oedipus)</i>	
11/2/2013 8:20 PM View respondent's answers	
"بيدوا لكل ملأ" و "فمكلكل لءا"	
Translation: <i>Ahl al-Kahf (The People of the Cave)</i> and <i>al-Malik Udib (King Oedipus)</i>	
11/1/2013 1:55 AM View respondent's answers	
فور الشرق يوميات ذئب في الأرياف, عص	
Translation: <i>Yawmiyat Naib fil- Aryaf (The Diary of a Countryside Prosecutor)</i> and ‘ <i>Usfur min al-Sharq (Bird from the East)</i>	
11/1/2013 1:42 AM View respondent's answers	
I think I read all his plays, books and novels. I read ‘ <i>Usfur min al-Sharq</i> more than 10 times.	
11/1/2013 1:41 AM View respondent's answers	
Al ‘abqaryat Translation: The Genius, or Intellectuals	
11/1/2013 1:16 AM View respondent's answers	

Q. 4 If you have read his books, was it part of your education or out of interest?

- Answered: 21
- Skipped: 3

Answer Choices –	Responses –
Education	4.76% 1
Interest	57.14% 12
I have not read any	19.05% 4
I have not heard of him or his works ever before	19.05% 4
Total Respondents: 21	
Comments(0)	

Q. 5 Would you be interested to know who he was?

- Answered: 21
- Skipped: 3

Answer Choices –	Responses –
Yes	100% 21
No	0% 0
Don't care	0%

Answer Choices –	Responses –
	0
Total Respondents: 21	
<u>Comments(3)</u>	
Showing 3 responses	
I know him	
11/4/2013 2:03 AM View respondent's answers	
I would not seek out information about him but might read it if I came across it by chance	
10/31/2013 8:57 PM View respondent's answers	
I don't know	
10/31/2013 12:47 PM View respondent's answers	

Q. 6 Have you ever noticed al-Hakim's books in a bookstore? If yes, mention which bookstore and where.

- Answered: 24
- Skipped: 0

Answer Choices –	Responses –
Yes	41.67% 10
No	58.33% 14
Total Respondents: 24	
<u>Comments(8)</u>	

Answer Choices –	Responses –
Showing 8 responses	
Al-Diwan Zamalek	
11/6/2013 1:31 AM View respondent's answers	
Al-Diwan, Cairo	
11/4/2013 5:34 PM View respondent's answers	
I don't remember	
11/4/2013 11:41 AM View respondent's answers	
rT) جري ر (translation: Many)	
11/2/2013 8:20 PM View respondent's answers	
Al-Diwan Bookstore	
11/2/2013 8:20 PM View respondent's answers	
In Cairo; Al-Diwan & Dar al-Shorouk	
11/1/2013 1:55 AM View respondent's answers	
I bought most of his books published by the original publisher (Maktabat Misr- Egypt Press) more than 15 years ago.	
11/1/2013 1:41 AM View respondent's answers	
Multiple book stores and libraries in Egypt	
11/1/2013 1:27 AM View respondent's answers	

Q. 7 Have you ever searched for his books in a library? And did you find any? Mention below.

- Answered: 24
- Skipped: 0

Answer Choices –	Responses –
Yes	25% 6
No	79.17% 19
Found	4.17% 1
Didn't find any	0% 0
Total Respondents: 24	
<u>Comments(2)</u> Because I used to read for another writer 11/4/2013 9:13 PM View respondent's answers I searched for it in UC system libraries and was excited to find a good collection of his short plays. 11/1/2013 1:41 AM View respondent's answers	

Q. 8 Are you male or female?

- Answered: 24
- Skipped: 0

Answer Choices –	Responses –
Male	45.83% 11
Female	54.17% 13

Answer Choices –	Responses –
Total	24

Q. 9 In which year were you born?

- Answered: 23
- Skipped: 1

Showing 19 responses		
1966	10/31/2013 12:47 PM	View respondent's answers
1968	11/2/2013 8:20 PM	View respondent's answers
1970	11/2/2013 8:20 PM	View respondent's answers
1971	11/1/2013 2:08 PM	View respondent's answers
1973	11/2/2013 7:59 PM	View respondent's answers
1975	11/4/2013 2:03 AM	View respondent's answers
1978	11/6/2013 1:31 AM	View respondent's answers
1980	11/4/2013 11:41 AM	View respondent's answers
1980	11/1/2013 1:41 AM	View respondent's answers
1981	11/1/2013 1:27 AM	View respondent's answers
1982	11/4/2013 8:26 AM	View respondent's answers
1982	11/1/2013 1:16 AM	View respondent's answers
1982	10/31/2013 8:57 PM	View respondent's answers
1983	11/4/2013 8:15 AM	View respondent's answers
1985	11/1/2013 1:55 AM	View respondent's answers
1985	11/4/2013 9:13 PM	View respondent's answers
1986	11/4/2013 1:53 AM	View respondent's answers

1986	11/1/2013 2:06 AM View respondent's answers
1989	11/1/2013 1:42 AM View respondent's answers
1990	11/1/2013 1:29 AM View respondent's answers
1992	11/5/2013 3:27 AM View respondent's answers
1993	11/4/2013 1:39 AM View respondent's answers

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Personal Interview with Mr. Muhammed Rifa'at

Assistant editor of October Magazine, writer, journalist and poet

Date: 21st August 2014

Cairo, Egypt

1. What can you tell me of Nasser's reign and the intellectual arena at the time?

Nasser was an intellectual leader. He used to read a lot and he also subsidised books so that they are affordable to all. I remember a book once cost me only 60 piasters. Although Nasser provided a platform for intellectuals to debate and engage into the matters of the state, underlying this, the political arena only had one voice, that of the socialist party. Nasser was one who did not like someone to disobey him. When his reign came to an end, some Arabic films showed how people were threatened, kidnapped and tortured by the secret services. He may have allowed some intellectuals to speak their minds more than others, such as in the case of Tawfiq al-Hakim. It is said that once al-Hakim spoke badly of a few of Nasser's policies and the 'Nasserists' heard of this. When they complained to the President, he told them not to intervene and to allow al-Hakim to say whatever he wished. The reason for this lenience is believed to be due to Nasser's admiration for al-Hakim whom he considered to be like a "god-father" to him. It is said that when Nasser was in his youth, he had read al-Hakim's *'Awdet al-Ruh (The Return of the Spirit)* where al-Hakim had written of a leader who will lead the people and be loved by them. Nasser have been inspired by al-Hakim's words.

2. What about Sadat's reign?

Sadat was not as an intellectual as Nasser was. And although he did not play a major role intellectually, he was keen to implement his "open door" policy only for economic gain. When Nasser died, it is said that Al-Hakim fainted and when he recovered, he gave a speech, although he was not accustomed to talk in public much, and said "today, the nation has lost a true hero". Soon after that, al-Hakim published *'Awdet al-Wa'y (The Return of Consciousness)* criticising Nasser and Nasser's policies. This caused a negative stir amongst Nasserists and those who

saw Nasser as a hero. Al-Hakim was, thus, criticised as being two-faced and a hypocrite. In this book, he reveals his views in regards of Nasser's policies, his tactics which led the nation to defeat in 1967, to an extent where he described Nasser's rule as one that ended in a form of a "dictatorship". In my view, this is a common problem that we tend to fall into; namely that every ruler who comes into power, erases the heritage and any merits of the one who reigned before him. This is a habit that has reoccurred since the Pharaonic era. Nasser, although allowed (to some extent) intellectuals to debate, he seems to have done so in order to mask his ways of "dictating to" or "guiding the" nation (in Arabic *Tawgeeh*). And by the way, Nasser himself wrote a book titled *The Philosophy of Revolution* which he made public.

3. Did you hear previously of Al-Hakim's equilibrium doctrine?

Yes, I have. I know that it is a doctrine of "mediation", meaning a mediation between what is borrowed from the West and what is taken from the East (in order to form some sort of merge). This is a common problem that I think writers at his time struggled with as shown in al-Hakim's '*Usfur min al-Sharq* (A Bird from the East) published during his time in France. The idea of consolidating ideas from the East and the West seems, to me, impossible because if one takes these ideas, from either tradition, one takes them with a set of other ideas or ideologies that one cannot overlook. They come, in my view, as a package, you cannot be selective.

4. Did you know of Sartre's visit to Egypt in 1967?

Yes, I think I came across a document of some sort in the past where Yousef Idris wrote about their visit.

5. What do you think of the opposition that Al-Hakim faced in the period close to his death?

The opposition became explicit in the late 70s, although it was present to some extent much more before that. With the "awakening of Islam" movement and other strict religious movements in parts of the Middle East, al-Hakim's position became worse. One of the leading clerics who attacked al-Hakim's philosophical work and ideas was Shaykh Sha'rawy.

6. Do you see a role for philosophy today in Egypt?

Yes, there is a role for philosophy in Egypt. There are prominent intellectuals today in Egypt who engage in various debates regardless of restrictions put upon them from the government or from the public etc. This was not the case before the revolution and still to some extent there are indeed social and political "barriers" on the intellectual. But society, during the last few years, has really changed in Egypt and I am hopeful the change that will happen in the next few years, will also be for the better. It is true that you can find in Egypt today groups of people with similar ideologies forming closed groups everywhere, meaning that you can find the fanatic, the atheist, the existentialist, the socialist, the liberalist, the Marxist and so on. Today, we have all sorts of ideologies amongst us.

7. Is there room today for al-Hakim's philosophical ideas?

Yes, it is important for us today to focus on introducing “empirical thought” (in Arabic, *Al Fikr al Tagreebi*) to students of all ages in order to nurture their creativity and talent. The sort of education that focuses on one ideology or one specialisation alone or area of study, is one that is not aiding the development and progress of the individual in his or her society. For example, we send to Kuwait and other parts of the Golf area our best doctors and architects, but what about the majority of students who learnt subjects other than medicine and engineering? What about those who learnt Business, Accounting or Literature, what will become of them and what opportunities are there for them in Egypt (as well as abroad)? I see that education should introduce new ways which can give students new ideas and help them think, criticise and analyse and form their own opinions than be dictated to what to think and what to do.



Personal Interview with Mr. Muhammed Shamroukh

Al-Ahram Newspaper columnist and writer

Date: 6th September 2014

Cairo, Egypt

1. What can you tell me of about Tawfiq al-Hakim?

He is a great author who belongs to the school of realism. He was influenced by many things as a result of the vast translation movement of the mid-19th century. Those who influenced Tawfiq al-Hakim were: Al ‘aqad, Taha Hussein and Ahmad Lotfi al-Sayid. He was interested in the French literature and the arts. His trip to Paris in 1925 allowed him to develop this interest and he was influenced by what he heard and saw there.

2. What can you say about Al-Hakim as “the father of the theatre of the Absurd”?

Al-Hakim introduced this genre for the first time to Egypt. Albert Camus’ theatre of the Absurd was particularly presented in al-Hakim’s play *Ya tali’ al-Shajara (The Tree Climber)* which is inspired also by a song from the Egyptian folklore with the same title. This attempt (introducing the theatre of the absurd) was, in my view, not successful in Egypt. It reminds me of the films of Yusuf Shahin in the Egyptian cinema; no one seems to understand them.

3. What do you know of Al-Hakim’s equilibrium doctrine?

The equilibrium doctrine is al-Hakim’s attempt to compete with the philosophers of his time or in other words, to produce for himself a philosophy. In my view, it did not win him a place amongst them. He is after all a columnist, a dramatist and people did not understand what his philosophy is about. He was unable to fulfil his aim of becoming a philosopher. The Equilibrium in my view is an ideology of “response” to others. In al-Hakim’s case, the writer overshadowed the philosopher.

4. What is the relationship between Sartre and al-Hakim?

There is no relationship. Sartre's existentialism was founded on "individualism" and we, in the East, do not support this concept; it does not appeal to the Eastern mind. Also, the denial of god is an idea that is prohibited in the East. For the West, this denial is not a source of anxiety for the West like it is for the East. The Hippie movement of the 1960s that was driven by existential thought became familiar to Egyptians and this movement did not also appeal to us.

5. What do think of Al-Hakim's *Arini Allah (Show me God)* published in 1953?

I read the work very briefly when I was still in University and I witnessed the fierce attacks on al-Hakim. He first introduced the work in a series of articles published in al-Ahram newspaper and no one supervises the work of an author as prominent as him. His work goes straight to print without supervisions. Al-Hakim retreated from his position and admitted that he was wrong to do so (i.e. to impersonate God in a conversation) I am not sure but I think the person in charge of al-Ahram at the time was Ali Hamdi al-Gamaal.

6. What do you think is the future of Philosophy in Egypt today?

Philosophy is a subject in the museum of history. It has become part of our heritage.

7. Do you see any hope for intellectuals in Egypt?

We are in a very critical stage. I think the 21st century man is one who is dependent on technology. He has lost his freedom to technology and became its slave. We have no privacy and no individuality today. Facebook and other applications have stolen these from us. We have been chained willingly by technology. I wrote once an article entitled "A Spy in my Pocket" (*Gasous fi gayby*) where I spoke of how google and Youtube have taken everything that was once private and made it public. I feel I lost my freedom to technology. And the ethics that I use to know were altered. For example, I find it scandalous that one calls a person who burned one of Egypt's treasures; that is the Institute of science, a hero. How did he become a hero? Ethics changed accordingly with the change in modern societies. We gave our freedom and identity to the "cooperation". Our culture has become one of consumerism and a culture of fame rather than one of content and standards.

Source: *al-Ahram* Microfilm (archive) Original Egyptian newspaper announcements of Sartre and de Beauvoir's visit to Cairo, Egypt and other parts of the Middle East.



Front page of *al-Ahram* Newspaper: (Heading) Jean Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir in Cairo (24th of February, 1967)

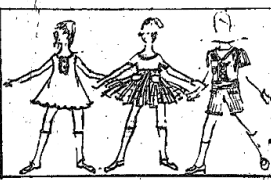
Translated text: Arrived to Cairo, at half past ten in the evening, the French prominent writer and philosopher Jean Paul Sartre and the French writer Simone de Beauvoir accompanied by Claude Lanzmann, executive editor of Sartre's *Les Temps Modernes*. The guests were met at Cairo airport by Tawfiq al-Hakim, member of the managerial board of al-Ahram Newspaper and some of the prominent intellectuals and a few of al-Ahram team. Sartre, de Beauvoir and Lanzmann left Paris at six in the evening (local time) to arrive in Cairo after four and a half hour journey. The writers, who were invited by al-Ahram, will spend two weeks in Cairo. Their tour begins in Cairo today.



(Above) Published on the 24th of February 1967 in *al-Ahram* newspaper is an article titled “Sartre and Existentialism: a non-philosophical explanation of the doctrine, its influences and origins”. This was written by Pierre Sharpie⁵⁰³ and summarised by Dr. Hussein Mo'ness. The content of this article is difficult to read because it is only available on microfilm but my speculation is that it gives a brief summary of Sartre’s philosophy and the main concepts that he addresses in a simplified manner in order for the everyday Egyptian to understand it.

(Below) *al-Ahram* article published in “Women and Home” section of *al-Ahram* newspaper on 26th of February 1967 titled “The Second Sex female Philosopher in Cairo”. The article talks of de Beauvoir’s career and companionship to Sartre and their philosophy with a focus on a brief synopsis of her book, *The Second Sex*.

⁵⁰³ It is difficult to know the surname of the writer, but possible translations could also be “Pierre Sharpo”.



« خضعة المستعبد .. ويقصد بالفترة الملائس الباهرة »
 وهكذا يرفض ان يطلق عليها اسم « جبهة » لان كل فلسطين
 وله امتياز الى ٧٥ ساعة في العمل .
 الفكرة ، وخطوط سهولي هو بنفسه توريدها على العالم
 بعد ان يوافق كل تفصيل لها بنفسه . وهو اقرب ان يكون
 توريح موزيوت الى اول الامر الى نطاق سيق وصغير ، ولكن
 بهيه من جودة هذا التنازع .

[illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible]

الزمن : هجراير عام
١٩٦٥ .
مواكب الاناقة تمر في
بيوت أزواج الخياطة
الراقية في باريس امام
عبورن التي صممت
وصحيفة ومستر اجني،
الفيون تتسمر بلالي
وتعب . ان الوضعة
تتمدد مثل نهر مرقق .
اقلام الصمغيين لم تدون
تغير اكبر في الخطوط ،
فكل شيء هاديء .
المشترين الاجانب
يحاولون فقط ان يروا
بمعنى الطلبات
التكالييف التي يتكهنونها

وهجأحدثت الصلحة.
(هـ) انطلقنا ليلنا
في الصلوة الأولى
الليلة. (هـ) لم تكن
فقط مجرد صلاة طويلة
وجيدة بل خطبات
مبسطة. (و) ولما
تأملت امرأة جديدة امرأة
الهند، امرأة علم ٢٠٠٠
عام. (هـ)
امرأة من هندو-صوم.
من جديد. لأن الزيادة
خطواتها التيسيرية الصاعدة
مثل خطوط الصواريخ
والتي تلتصق بالفضاء
صوم. لأنهم ما يتقدمه
البيض لأمع في لون ديش
البيج.

أن اختراع موسيقى جديدة ،
شهره على يفسله وعلمه كل
ملوك الآراء . فقدم اختراع
الغداية ، وأخبر البابويه ،
فكان استخدم الآلهة
المزخرفة نفوسها حلاقة ،
وبور فويل كل واحد منها
أخذت قسرا . فهو في عام
١٩٤٢ بقلبة « التيسلو » ،
منما جعل ذيل الجيب يسقط

موضة
مستديرة على شستل كزة



الفسفونات الانثوية
رزة احدثت مكان الهاندات
كلت نصيب الذي كالانار
سنان بصحة بولو ملان
الفسفونات ايضا
مكرة
ستوات يمكن استعمالها في
ر وحيده شستل فساتنك
مع

سنان « كروبيوس » من
الرمات يوجع بدن اللون
س والأظفار المتساقط
تأكله مسخاة روح
ببرقة الله يسارة وجوبه


 اوفروال للبلاج بشورت
 وبليسة تنوية الجوار
 ازه السبياني ، وهي
 توكيت

وتمشي وسفره من
مجلته الى ان يكن
هو سفير وشفتيه
ت من ان يلقى
او يزيد على الثلاثين
رخلاتنا الواسعة
نظرته الى الجحش
شكة بولوار
هور في نفس الجدل
ن من ان الجحش بان
و الثلث ان صيده
ة لها من الكنية :
من التورية ،
واما المسؤل ،
البركية من تمة
ن من الطهي وقد
التيه وفرة المد
قارب افكارها ، بل
القبيرات ويوصل
الطهي والامر
التي تشتمل حبة
هذا الغنى وسه

وبسكوته التمس
جانبها في السوربون
بين المكونة بين أوروبا
باريسي وكان أرواحها
الصادقة « بسيطة » بلا
لها ما ساعطني في
فيها أمدت صياغة
التيئة عشرة
فيها جعلها
أنه لم يكن مضمينا
فيها وأوالها هي في
فيها، والبقول مضمية
سوى عدم التكرار
فيها هي مبري الكائنات
« بين انهما » وفي
فيها بأن ما بعد
فيها كمنزلة أو التي
والتيبة وجملة
أنني رجعت على

سَمَوَاتٍ لَّهُمْ
فَلَمَّا مَا جِئْتَ كَذِبًا
المراساة بين الرجل
من هذه النقطه
ترجع الى اختلاف
قول اوسى لا تظن
من جسد الرجل
سببه الجسدية من
منظرة الثقالة لها
العقود التي يقول
وان هذا الوجود
من الناحية الجنسية
في رأي الاختلاف
في حشرات نظري
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من أسرارها التي لم يعلم بها
الآخرى ويكن تشاركت لم يتسنى
إسماؤها أو زوجها ، ذلك ولدت والديها
أبناهما دنياه العظيمة من الذي
بني عليها من أسرار ما يعرفه
يفتح ، إلى أين سلك ودان
يعلم من التي سريروسيا وسيا
لكن سكتها دنياه العظيمة لسكن
وأخلاها يحمل في غسي الجوان
إن سميت أسبون طليقة في
من أسرار أوولوكها عالم المراهقة
من فارتوت ما لا شك أسرار
في المكتوبة لطيفة الترات في كل
سكن طورتي في يولوان من قبل
القصوى لتسيرة إلى المقوم
المترقة في جثمانها في الاستقبال
إن أخذت في التفسير ، وقد
ما فقرة السرد وفسرة التفسير
ثم فقرة السرد المقدسي إن
أرسل اهتمامها بها بغير فائد
تسكن البنية على هذه الخبرات
يترسل لتسكن السرد الأممي
أدناه من جملته إلى الأسرار

في هذا اليوم ..
 .. ترواحه ..
 .. نطقه سحره فيقولون
 .. حركه كائن متروحه عا
 .. وسط روضه
 .. واخضر كائن حياه
 .. انشلال
 .. تقول ..
 .. مؤازره جدا ..
 .. ارقه نسا ..
 .. هذه العزله ..
 .. في القفره ..
 .. اصحت سموت في بطوره
 .. يكون وروحه ..
 .. اوله عتبه ..
 .. عتبه شتاه ..
 .. صرحا برضا مديه
 .. عتاهنا كثر شياطينه السريه
 .. والحد نزل لاجله
 .. في العزله ..
 .. تراسات ملك وفي رضى
 .. عتبه اصحاب
 .. طافوا ..
 .. على الجاني
 .. بحسبي على عتبه النصارى
 .. لاله العزله ..
 .. حركه نسا ..
 .. حركه نسا ..

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والذي
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الكتاب من
بعض اليونان
التاريخيين
مقلد
سجلات
الاجرام
في الدور
هيروغليفية
ويوهي الراى
فها امريكا
واالحريكة
وعوانا لها
الخرج
من الى احد
يسمى نلوه

إتافي
ات الامريكى

فيكون السوفيات منهم يتكلمون
في نفس تفتيح كنهية و واضمح
15 سنة وسعاده بان برنامج تدييه
منه خطفلة من جمهورية البوسنة
منها السوفيات اذ كانت فيه وكثرة اذ
في دعاية في التفكر فاه اثرت
تكونجوسوي وطيدوا وايضت من
في كنهية 1000 كانه .. وتجاوز الواسع
في وقتة والمخبرات الاميركية في
التي تراجا
هذه كانه سبرها .. التي اعطت
فيها .. التي تهر ان
الموصل الى الطوية -توتيل
في الاميركي سواء في التخلل و
مخبرات الاميركية استطاعت من
التي اكبر انشد باسم 3... كانه
طلب ..



أزمة المهاجرين

ان قوت شکر تو
مارکس، بیلر
شوروی دلا کتک
وفا کان ان
الاجریه کیه
بعض اصحاب
انکلی نظام
شوروی، تاسین
الضمان بالصوره
والتکلیف الخ
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ايديال تعود إلى عملاتها
بثقيسيتها المريح

٨ قدم
دفعه أولى ٣٩,٠٠٠
نقط شهري ٩,٧٠٠

١٠ قدم
دفعه أولى ٥٩,٠٠٠
نقط شهري ١١,٦٠٠

مدّة ١٢ شهراً
ميسراته أخري في الدفع
تتمشى مع كل دخل

انتاج
شركة الدلتا الصناعية

ايدِالِ
IDEAL

الرسل والفقهاء السبعة
 الى الجبل ، وبشكل ان
 ١٩٦٤ عندما اخبرته الوردة
 في فلسطين فسيروا
 ولطويلا حتى انهم
 وادخلوا القلعة ،
 والتمسوا لغيره ولشأن
 ذات في السور ، وفي الخط
 التبرير ، في كتاب «ميراث
 .. يابسا في كل وقت مع
 جورج كيتش فهدم الجدار
 يدور ويكره في الهواء
 سورة لتلكا كرسف العالم

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